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Eva Rocek Memoirs

SHAKESPEARE SAVED MY LIFE

EVA ROCEK

I

Eva Rocek Memoirs

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To our sons Martin and Thomas
and grandchildren
Miriam, Thomas, Laura and Julian

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Preface

I am a storyteller, not a writer. It takes me days to gather enough energy even to write a simple letter; as a result all the writing in our family was relegated to my husband, Jan, who likes to write as long as it can be done on the computer, but does not like to talk. I have told parts of my story many times at different occasions and I gave a videotaped interview for the Holocaust Educational Foundation (a Yale University sponsored project) in 1994 and for Spielberg's Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation in 1995. However, I have been under constant pressure from my family and good friends to write my memoirs and so I finally started reluctantly and very slowly sometime in 2001. Because of my aversion to writing, the progress was very slow, but I eventually finished my recollections about my family, my early life and got as far as my departure from Theresienstadt. Then my writing efforts again stopped and in 2006 I could not continue because of my failing memory. Jan therefore offered to complete my memoirs from his own memory of my stories which he has heard me retell dozens of times and also from the video recordings. Together, we then went through everything he wrote, and I corrected and supplemented it. Here is the product of first my own and then our joint efforts.

Father

My father Viktor was born on May 1, 1898 as the first child of Eleanor (Lora) Münz and Zibrid Porges. Zibrid was a businessman of middling success; he imported fish into Czechoslovakia. He was born in Horazdovice, a small town in southwestern Bohemia, where his parents owned a country store. My father's mother Eleanor (Lora) was also born in Horazdovice. She was the only daughter of Edward Münz and his wife Bertha, née (born) Dubská.

The Münz family had a largish farm and also manufactured whiskey from the rye they grew. Today there is a restaurant in the house in which they lived, which the owner, Ing. Horak, named "U Münz" in memory of the original occupants.

I found an interesting note about my great-grandfather in the book "Die Juden und Jugendgemeinden Böhmens in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart" (The Jews and Jewish Communities of Bohemia in the Past and Present), Hugo Gold, 1934. In an article "The History of the Jews in Horazdovice and Surroundings" written in Czech, the author Karel Nemec noted:

"As everywhere else under Austrian rule German was the official language of the Jewish community. However, in 1885 the Jewish community elected as its chairman the progressive Eduard Münz, a manufacturer of spirits, who during the first meeting announced: "We, the Jews, live here in a totally Czech locality and have no interest in the German language. I am therefore proposing that the community should use the Czech language in its official dealings and further that the Czech language be used for prayers in the synagogue, at funerals and that the inscriptions on the gravestones should also be in Czech." The proposal was accepted and from there on Czech was used in the business dealings of the community. There were certain difficulties from the side of the Austrian offices, so that for example it took ten years before the Austrian authorities permitted the use of the Czech language in birth and death records. The other members of the first board to conduct its business in Czech were: Jakob Kohn, merchant, Herman Steiner, merchant, Jakub Porges, merchant, Marek Kohn, chemist, Josef Eisner, economist. Eduard Münz was also responsible for the Jewish school's change from German to Czech. It behooves me to note that the newly appointed rabbi, Martin Friedman, was asked to conduct the prayers in the synagogue in Czech, although he knew barely three words of Czech. He promised to do so and after a day's of hard work delivered. Only the pronunciation was not quite right, but even that improved with time."

My great-grandfather Eduard and great-grandmother Berta had six children: Karel, Josef, my grandmother Lora, Pavel, Frantisek and Jaroslav.

Eduard's farm and the family business were inherited by Frantisek. None of his family survived the Holocaust. According to the records in the Terezin Memorial Book was his wife Malvina, nee Ofnerova (b. 6/27/1892) and their son Hugo (b.12/6/1912) deported to Terezin (Theresienstadt) from Klatovy on 2/26/1942, transport "Cd" and then to Auschwitz in February 1943. There is no mention of Frantisck - he probably was no longer alive. Jaroslav died at a young age as a result of appendicitis.

Karel Münz married one of my mother's stepsisters, Ella Bondy. Karel and Ella moved to Abbazia on the Adriatic Sea, then part of Austria-Hungary, later - between the two world wars - belonging to Italy, and now known as Opatija in Croatia. They had two sons; the older, Jaroslav (Jaro) Münz, survived the war in Canada. The younger son, Jula, fell in love with a beautiful gentile Italian girl with whom he had two children Franco and Giuliana. This was already during the war and - because Jula was Jewish - they could not get married. When the Germans occupied Italy, Jula

joined the Italian partisans, but when he learned that Jews were being rounded up to be deported, he went to rescue his parents, Karel and Ella. Unfortunately they were all caught and perished in Auschwitz. The train in which they were transported to Auschwitz happened to pass through Horovice. One day Mr. Stepanek, Ella's gentle brother-in-law, got an anonymous phone call informing him that his sister-in-law would be on a train stopping in Horovice. He did not know which sister-in-law it would be - he assumed that it would be one who had been arrested for political reasons, but in any case he packed up a basket with food and came to the train station. Surprisingly enough he was able to approach the train, find the Münzes, and give them the food. They gave him some jewelry - which he returned to the family after the war. After the war Jaro Münz went to Italy, found his brother's children, who during the war were in boarding schools, financed their education and arranged that they would receive the Münz family name. Franco is married to an Italian physician; they have three children and live not far from Florence. Giuliana married an American, a Mr. Kaufman, had with him two children, Julian (another Julian in the family!) and Deborah. Giuliana later got a divorce; she lives in North Carolina.

Pavel Münz, emigrated to Canada with both of his children Helena and Ota. Jaro and Helena, though they were first cousins, were married in Prague about 1931 or 1932, and my cousins Harry Pisinger and Edward (Eda) Werner and I carried the long train of the bride's dress. Another of my grandmother Lora's brothers, Joscf, who had three sons, perished with his entire family in the Holocaust.

My father had two younger sisters: Anna, who was married to Vilem Werner, a silversmith, and Ruzena, who was married to Ing. Arnost Pisinger. The entire Werner family perished in the Holocaust. Arnost and Ruzena Pisinger survived in Theresienstadt only to learn that their only son Harry died shortly before the end of the war, in April 1945, in the concentration camp Kaufering.

My father attended a Czech grade school in Horazdovice and was then sent to a German gymnasium in Prague. (Karel Polacek, one of the well known writers of the Czechoslovak Republic, attended the same gymnasium and he and Father became friends). Upon graduation in 1916, Father was immediately drafted into the Austro-Hungarian army as an "Einhähig freiwilliger" [one-year volunteer] which was an officer training program for men who had at least finished a gymnasium. (In peace time it was a one-year officers' school). It was voluntary, but had he not enrolled, he would have been drafted for 3 years of service. He spent the war on the Italian front, was wounded 3 times and came home with strong antimilitary feelings, a bullet hole

in the calf of one leg and deafness in one ear. Of the stories he told me, I particularly enjoyed the one, about a fellow army officer, whom father somehow offended with a joke and who challenged father to a duel by throwing his white glove at father's feet.

Since father considered dueling an uncivilized custom, he picked up the glove and asked the challenger politely if he should take it to the cleaners. That stopped the potentially dangerous and nonsensical fight. However, Father was not a coward: once in his youth some man in his birthplace made an anti-Semitic remark. Father picked him up and threw him in the water fountain.

Father was lots of fun and would sometimes play jokes on mother. He had a rather strange sense of humor which, I think, I inherited to some extent. I remember one day walking with him in the center of Prague, when he suddenly yelled out: "Yucatan." Once when we rode in a train, we made our way to the second class even though we had only third class tickets, because the third class was overcrowded. When the conductor came and demanded additional payment, my father kept saying: "Don't shout at me, I am afraid of you" until the conductor started yelling like mad. Once, when he forgot my mother's birthday, he got very upset and angry with her because she did not remind him: "You did that on purpose!" At a party, when he was a little tipsy, he started undressing. Mother stopped him quickly by taking off her jacket and starting to unbutton her blouse; in a jiffy Father was fully dressed again.

Food was very important to Father and Mother cooked the things he liked. She was not allowed to telephone him when he was in the office, but there was one exception - when she changed the planned menu. That was something he needed to know, he did not want to come home unprepared. Once we had guests for dinner and Father complained that the rice was overcooked. The guests did not agree and helped themselves to more of it. Father was offended and left the table - though not for long. He had a short temper, but his anger always lasted only a very short time. Once he got angry at mother for some reason, scolded her and left the apartment, but when he reached the street level, he decided that he had not scolded her enough, took the elevator, came back home and continued. Neither mother or anybody else, and most likely not even he himself, took these occasional outbursts seriously.

Upon his return from the war, Father had a big argument with the rabbi in his hometown and left the Jewish congregation. I never found out what the argument was about, but I know that Father became an atheist. He enrolled in the law school of Charles University and upon graduation joined a large prestigious law firm in Prague as a "koncipient," a sort of apprentice attorney-at-law. He was doing really

well when a problem arose: his boss liked him so much that he wanted him to marry his daughter, promising him a dowry of one million crowns. (A very large sum of money in those days). Since father did not want to marry this particular lady, he lost his job, but quickly found another good one. Generally he was a very cheerful fellow, had a number of friends, liked to joke around, and to spend Saturday afternoons and all of Sundays with us.

He was not a strict disciplinarian and whenever I asked him whether I could do this or that, his standard answer was: "Ask Mommy." Mother used to joke that Father was the head of the family, but she was the neck, which turned the head. I think, in retrospect, that it was not a joke but a fair description. Father did not seem to mind.

During the German occupation all Jewish men had to have a medical examination to determine whether they were fit for physical labor. Father returned completely shattered: "I have tuberculosis and the doctors were already shaking their heads about my case." Mother immediately went to find out what the situation was. Yes, they had indeed found that he had tuberculosis, but they were not shaking their heads because they thought that it was a hopeless case, as Father believed, but because: "A big strong guy looking like health itself, does not sweat, does not cough and he has a cavity the size of a five crown coin!"

I loved my father very, very much and missed him terribly.

Mother

My mother was born in Horovice on May 17, 1899. Her father, Julius Bondy, died in 1906 when Mother was only seven years old and my grandmother soon started relying on her more and more for help and support. Mother finished nine years of school and then was sent to a "pensionat," a sort of finishing school, for two years to learn German and French. I know that as a young woman she also learned sewing and cooking and that she used to play tennis. However I never heard her speak French. Being the eldest of the four grandmother Jana's (my Babicka) children, she used to escort her three younger siblings to and from school. Once she came home very angry and reported that some kid was shouting anti-Semitic slurs at them. My grandmother dressed up and had herself driven by the coachman to the school, in order to complain. The school principal took her to the class in order to investigate. One of the boys said to the principal: "Sir, you do not have to punish

the boy anymore, Aninka (that was my mom) tore out a plank from a fence and broke it over him."

After finishing her education, Mother took an office job in Prague. Her childhood girlfriend, Jindra Houdkova, was now married to Mr. Alois Schier, a merchant in a town in northern Bohemia, Jablone nad Orlici; it was not a happy marriage. Jindra had some health problem that required her to spend some time in the capital of the young Czechoslovak Republic. So Mother and Jindra were now together and could enjoy their time in Prague. However there was one problem: the two attractive young women with no male escort were often bothered by the unwanted attentions of admirers, who wanted to flirt with them. They decided that they needed a male escort, who would treat them just as a friend. In a few days they spotted a tall handsome fair young man and my mother said: "There is our elephant", (meaning a safe escort). This young man was Viktor Porges, whom my mother knew, because his uncle, Karel Münz, was married to Mother's half sister Ella Bondy. So Viktor started escorting the two women around Prague and after some time confided to Jindra that he had fallen in love with Anka (Anna). But he was afraid to propose to her because she had such a sharp tongue. Jindra promised to help him and one day soon after, while they were in a restaurant, she suggested that they all three drink to their friendship. Viktor used the opportunity to propose. I suspect that Jindra must have been pretty sure of my mother's feelings and knew that my mother rather fancied Viktor. However, grandmother Bondy hesitated to agree to the marriage, because she feared that the Porges and Münz family would not approve of it, since my mother, except for furniture, had no dowry. Father solved the problem by suggesting that they should play cards and if he won, she had to give him her daughter. He won.

Anna Marie Bondyova and Viktor Porges were married on August 18th, 1926 in a civil ceremony in Horovice. After Mother died in 1993 I found among her papers a letter from my father addressed to Jindra where he thanked her for her help and wrote how very happy he and Anka were. It was written shortly after my parents' marriage and Jindra must have kept it all these years and given it to my mother only during one of her visits to America. Funnily enough, Mother never showed me the letter, though she told me the story.

Grandfather Julius Bondy

My mother's father, Julius Bondy, had a rather interesting background. He was born in Horni Jeleni, a tiny village in eastern Bohemia, where his mother, née Eleanor Fuchs, had grown up. Later they lived in a nearby larger larger, Golcuv Jenikov, with a sizable Jewish community. His father, Solomon Bondy, was a very pious man and spent much of his life on trips to the "Holy Land". He did not provide for his wife and children very well.

Solomon Bondy died on one of his trips somewhere in Istanbul and left his widow and several children (I do not know how many), in the care of some relatives. One day a cousin of my grandfather came for a visit. He was a student of a military academy, a training school for officers of the Austro-Hungarian Army. The cousin said to my grandfather: "If you had graduated from a gymnasium (an eight year high school following five years of grade school), you too could have attended a military academy and become an officer". My grandfather Julius had finished only five years of grade school; he knew, however, that a nearby gymnasium burned down not too long ago. He wrote to the military academy, claiming that he had lost his gymnasium graduation diploma. He explained that he could not replace the missing document, since the gymnasium from which he had graduated, had burned down. The explanation was accepted and Julius Bondy was admitted to the entrance examination and having successfully passed it, was admitted to the military academy; upon graduation he joined the army. He rose through the ranks to captain. He gave up his military career because he fell in love with a girl who had no dowry. In the Austro-Hungarian army an officer had to live like a gentleman, so a poor man had to marry a rich girl if he wanted to pursue his career as an "officer and a gentleman". (By the way a Jew could have risen only to the rank of a colonel. To rise further he would have to have been baptized.) Anyway, grandfather chucked his army career, married his first wife, (I think that her maiden name was Glaser), moved to Horovice, a town about 50 km west of Prague) and started manufacturing matches. Later on, he switched to manufacturing furniture. However, thanks to his military rank he belonged to the prominent citizens of Horovice: official visits were often welcomed by the master of the Horovice chateau, count Vilem von Hanau, and by Captain Bondy.

Grandfather Julius Bondy became the head of the Horovice Jewish community and was instrumental in the building of the first and only synagogue in town. He secured the support of count von Hanau, a protestant and also an army officer, who made the largest monetary contribution of 500 guilders. In spite of his prominent position in the Jewish community he asked to have on his tombstone the following verse of Heinrich Heine, a leading German poet, a Jew who converted to Christianity:

Keine Messe wird man singen
Keinen Kaddish wird man sagen
Nichts gesagt and nichts gesungen
wird an meinen Sterbetagen

In loose translation (my own):

No mass will be sung
No Kaddish will be said
Nothing will be said nor sung
On the anniversaries of my death.

His wife gave my grandfather, Julius Bondy, 8 children; 5 sons: Bruno, Leo, Frantisek, Joseph, Karel Frantisek,(better known as Karl Franz) and 3 daughters: Ida, Ella and Milena. 6 years after his first wife died, he married a beautiful young woman named Jana (Johana) Pollakova, who was a clerk in his factory office. Jana was a daughter of Herman Pollak and Saly (Anna) née Schoenova. She bore him four children: The first, my mother Anna Marie was born on May 17, 1899. She died on November 9, 1993 in Wilmette, Illinois. Mother had 3 younger brothers: Jan, Antonin and the youngest, appropriately named Michael Benjamin.

Upon my grandfather's death in 1906, his villa and the factory in Horovice were inherited jointly by my grandmother and by Frantisek, one of the sons from grandfather's first marriage. Frantisek was married and lived with his wife and his mother-in-law in the same villa as my grandmother and her own four children. Grandmother and her children lived on the first floor and Frantisek with his wife and his mother-in-law lived on the second floor. In September 1914 upon the outbreak of World War I Frantisek was called up into the army and, unfortunately, almost immediately killed. His mother-in-law demanded that my grandmother immediately pay half of the value of the villa and factory to Frantisek's widow. To be able to do

that, my grandmother had to heavily mortgage the factory. In the nineteen-thirties during the Great Depression, the factory closed for ever. When my parents married twelve years later, in 1926, Father took upon himself the responsibility for paying off the loan and even of supporting his mother-in-law and her polio-crippled son.

Mother's siblings

I do not know too much about the fate of my mother's half siblings. My grandfather Julius was a strict father to his sons; he sent Leo and Bruno to America, because he was angry with them. It was never explained to me why, and I do not know whether my mother knew the reason. After all, she was not even born when it happened. She was seven years old, when her father died. Mother told me that the ship with Leo was lost at sea, but that Bruno had made it to the USA. Brothers Josef and Karl Franz were exiled to Vienna and both did quite well. Josef was a businessman and, apparently, a ladies man as well. He was married and had, I think, one or two children, one of them certainly a girl. But he also had a mistress. Eventually he divorced his wife, married the mistress and then acquired another mistress. When Hitler marched into Austria, Josef took his former and current wife as well as the current mistress and emigrated with his daughter and son-in-law to New Zealand (it might have been Australia). I think that the son-in-law, who was a lawyer, became a ski instructor and was killed in a skiing accident. The daughter was a physician. Anyway, as far as I remember, at the end of the war in 1945, Josef and his family were all dead.

Karl Franz was the most successful of Mother's half-siblings. In Vienna he started publishing an industrial magazine for manufacturers of wood products, but before long he owned a string of Viennese newspapers, including the influential *Telegraf*, *Echo*, *Neue Wien-Zeitung* and a number of other publications. He established contacts with the Austrian government and even befriended prime minister Schuschnig. His newspapers strongly supported Austrian independence and were highly critical of the Nazi regime in Austria's neighbor, Germany, as well as of Hitler himself. It came as no surprise that on the day of the "Anschluss", when the German forces marched into Austria and the Nazis assumed power in 1938, they immediately came to arrest him. Fortunately he managed to escape across the Hungarian border at the very last moment in a taxi, together with the editor of "Telegraf" Eugene Lennhoff and reporter count Curt von Straschwitz - after an unsuccessful attempt to enter Czechoslovakia, which had closed its borders to Austria. (See

Eugene Lennhof *The last Five Hours of Austria*, Frederick A. Stokes, New York, 1938).

At Karl Franz's home the Nazis found only his wife. She was his second wife (the first had died years earlier). However, as she was a Gentile and fortunately could prove it, they did not arrest her. Instead they "confiscated" all her jewels including the wedding ring. From Hungary Karl Franz came to Prague and he stayed with us for some time. My father urged him to stay in Czechoslovakia; after all he was born there, so father could have easily obtained permission for permanent residency for him. Karl Franz just laughed at my father and said: "You will have Hitler here within the year." My father, a Czechoslovak patriot and reserve lieutenant of the Czechoslovak army, said: "Hitler here? Never!" Hitler's army marched into Prague on March 15, 1939. Karl Franz and his son Julius (Djusi) ended up in New York, where they were later joined by Karl's wife, who got out of Austria via Italy.

I have in my possession two newspaper clippings. One is from the *Telegraf*, the paper owned by my uncle until the German invasion, which then had its name changed to "Deutscher *Telegraf*" (German Telegraph). On the first page is a caricature of uncle Karl Franz and of his son with the caption: "Bondy and his son, the jewish press hyenas, escape to Paris from the homeland Vienna. They took with them large sums of stolen money and want to found a new 'newspaper'." A clipping from another newspaper devoted a long section to Karl Franz Bondy and his co-workers and denounces him as "a newspaper dictator with close contacts with the government, particularly with the minister of finance," and identifies him as "the principal culprit of the relentless persecution of the National Socialists and responsible for their suffering in prisons."

After the war, my mother somehow got in touch with Karl Franz and he actually offered to take me to America, but I did not want to go and she did not press me. I was head over heels in love with Jan and busily catching up with my drastically interrupted education. I seem to remember that Karl Franz died the same year in New York. He also informed my mother that his son Djusi met his uncle Bruno Bondy, another half-brother of my mother, on a previous trip to the USA at which occasion Bruno informed him that he did not want to have anything to do with the Bondy family, because he was treated so poorly. After we came to the United states Mother contacted Djusi; he offered help, but as we did not need any, he had no interest in renewing family ties. Jan and I met with him once when we visited New York. By that time his name had been shortened to Bond and he was working in some capacity

for the United Nations. He took us to lunch but showed no interest in continued contacts. That was the last time I saw him.

I had also made a feeble attempt to find out about Bruno by searching the Mormon files, but couldn't find anything. Perhaps he too had changed his name.

Of my mothers three half-sisters, Ida married Mr. Stepanek, who used to work as a foreman in my grandfather's furniture factory and later opened his own factory and became a competitor. My grandmother did not approve of the marriage; however, it turned out that Mr. Stepanek was a very decent man who helped our family during the war. Their daughter, Zdene and Julius Bondy (see below), were my only cousins who survived the war. Zdene and her husband Antonin Lastovka had a very nice summer cottage in Cila near the village of Skryje, where we used to spend our summers, and we visited them frequently and they were always very helpful to us. When we started visiting Prague again after the fall of Communism in 1989, Antonin was no longer alive, but we visited Zdene and her daughter Olga regularly and both of them visited us in the United States. Zdene died at the age of 89 in 2004. Whenever we are in Prague, Olga meets us at the airport and generally takes care of us.

The next half-sister of my mother, Milena never married. She was a gifted artist and perished in Auschwitz.

The third of Mother's half-sisters, Ella, married Karel Münz (my father's uncle, see section about Father) .

Mother's younger brother Jan (Honza) Bondy was born in 1900, just a year after my mother. He was struck by polio at the age of eight or nine and never walked again. He spent the rest of his life in a wheelchair. Even though his hands were crippled and he held the brushes in a peculiar way, he learned to paint very well. He was able to earn a little money by painting portraits of people in the neighboring villages and also by making crosswords and other sorts of puzzles for several newspapers. He was my favorite uncle and I spent a lot of time with him whenever I was in Horovice.

My mother had two more younger brothers: Antonin (Tonda) married a gentile, survived the war and died in the nineteen fifties. Their son, Jula Bondy (another Julius in the family!), born 1929, being a "Mischling" (from a mixed marriage) was not sent to a concentration camp, but was kicked out of school, although two years

later than the kids who were "fully" Jewish. After the war, while he was fulfilling his compulsory military service, his Czech commanding officer said to him one day: "Bondy, you are Jewish, why don't you join the Haganah?" Haganah, the Jewish army, was at the time training in Czechoslovakia under the auspices of the Czechoslovak minister of foreign affairs, Jan Masaryk, the son of the late president Tomas Masaryk. He joined the Haganah, went to Israel and fought in all the wars. He and his wife Ester had four children and all live in Israel. He is my only living male cousin.

My mother's youngest brother Michael Benjamin died in a drowning accident about the time I was born.

Childhood

I was born May 29, 1927. During my early childhood there was not much variation in my life. We lived in Prague and used to travel on most weekends by train to my maternal grandmother's villa in Horovice, about forty miles from Prague. When I was very small, we lived in a small apartment on the "Na porici" street. Our first apartment was and in an old house, small and without modern conveniences (the toilet was outside the apartment in the hallway and was shared with several other tenants); apartments in downtown Prague were at that time very scarce and my father's income as a beginning lawyer was rather modest. After I finished 1st. grade, we moved to a much roomier and modern apartment in Trojanova street.

I remember very little from my early childhood. My mother used to take me to play in Prague's parks, but before too long I got a "Kinderfräulein," a nanny, who was to teach me German. This was discontinued after Hitler came to power in Germany, but I actually learned to speak and read the language. From my first grade I remember virtually nothing. I missed a lot of school, because I managed to get most of the common childhood diseases with the exception of scarlet fever and polio. I even got TB, and have a calcified hilus gland, which probably gave me some resistance against contracting TB during my stay in concentration camps.

When I was born, my father, who had left the Jewish congregation after a row with the rabbi upon his return from W.W.I, wanted me registered "without religion." My mother responded "All right, but then you should change your name." Since Father did not want to do that, Mother declared: "If you don't and her name is going to be Porges, she may as well be registered as a Jew." (Porges in Central Europe was

so typical a Jewish name, that many characters in Jewish jokes were called Porges). So I was registered as being of Jewish faith. In school religion was taught as a regular subject. There were separate classes for Catholics, Protestants and Jews. However, as my parents did not want me to be exposed to religious teachings, every year they had me excused from religious instruction. While other children had religion classes, I would be sitting somewhere reading a book. When we returned to Prague after the war, Mother changed our names to Trojanova and changed my religious registration to "without religion."

The only attempt at religious education came from my maternal grandmother who, when I was very little, tried to teach me a children's prayer: "My angel guardian, look after my soul, so that I will always be good and please God." However, in Czech the diminutive term for "guardian" was "straznicky" which sounded very much like to word "straznik" meaning policeman and "look after" in Czech "opatrui" sounded similar to "opatri" or to procure or provide with. So I modified the prayer to "Angel policeman, find me something good [to eat]," thus already betraying a gluttonous outlook on life in my early years.

I loved to read. My favored book at that time was one based on Greek mythology; I was fascinated by it. I must sadly confess that a beautiful huge illustrated book based on the Bible and called "Biblical Stories" made a lesser impression. By the time I was eight or nine I read everything within reach that was printed.

Father and I would take long walks together, but he sometimes forgot that my legs were a lot shorter than his. I was told that on one of these walks, I must have been perhaps five years old, he went too fast and I found it difficult to keep up with him. So I called after him: "Daddy, where does your blind passion lead you, I can not keep up with you." (I must have picked up the phrase "blind passion" from some movie ad.) He was always inventing funny stories: for example, whenever we saw a wild rabbit in the fields, father would say: "Look there goes Snukrdlik." Snukrdlik was father's invention: he claimed that this rabbit hid dyed eggs in grandmother's garden on Easter Monday. While I knew that the Christmas gifts came from my family, for some time I actually believed in the Easter Rabbit.

During our weekend walks in Prague Father would sometimes take me to a delicatessen and buy me a slice of pineapple or one of the typical Czech style open faced sandwiches and an orange drink. Sometimes we went to one of the floating eateries on the Vltava river where we ate fried fish. On rare occasions he took me to a

movie. After my grandmother Eleanora (Lora) Porgesova died, when I was about five years old, Father's father, grandfather Porges, lived with the family of my father's sister Anna Werner on the the other side of the Vltava river. Grandmother Lora used to call me her "little princess." On weekends spent in Prague, we sometimes went to visit the Werner family. Father and I would walk, while Mother usually took the streetcar. All in all I was a pretty spoiled and self-centered little girl, but I think not a selfish one.

We did not own a car. While I believe that my father earned good money, he also had large expenses: the payment of the mortgage on the then already defunct Horovice factory and also the salary of the guard, Mr. Stejskal, who had to punch the clocks distributed around the property in order to have the property insured; Mr. Stejskal was originally a stoker in the factory. Father also paid all the expenses for the Horovice household, since my grandmother had no income and my lame uncle Jan's (Honza's) income from painting portraits of the villagers and drawing puzzles for children's' newspapers, were marginal. Father also contributed to the upkeep of his own father.

After we moved to Trojanova street, I started to go to the Wenigova school near the Vltava river. I loved that school, and had very good friends there. While the mothers sat on the park benches and kept their eyes on us, we played detectives in the park on the Zofin island (just opposite the National Theatre). We formed a secret detective agency called "The Brotherhood of the Red Dog"; I still remember these girls' names, but I do not remember a single of our detective cases solved or unsolved.

School started at 8 AM and ended at noon. During the year, Father would come home for lunch and, after a short siesta, return to his office. In the hot summer days, he would spend the noon break at a swimming establishment floating in the Vltava river off the Zofin island. I would join him and Mother would bring lunch there. I soon learned to swim well enough that even my overprotective mother would allow me to rent a little row boat, and use it around the Zofin island between the two weirs.

By the time I turned about seven or eight, I started English and piano lessons. I also continued German in school, where it was taught as an optional subject in addition to the main curriculum. My piano teacher, Rafael Schächter, was to play an important role later in my life. Though I never really picked up playing piano after the war, he certainly enriched my life to a great extent.

My first English teacher was a young German Jewish refugee from Hitler. When she, wisely, left to go to a safer place (I hope she made it), my next English teacher was a refugee from Russia. Both ladies taught me the grammar and spelling very well; unfortunately I never learned to speak with the proper accent. I remember that my English lessons took place on Wednesday afternoon. I came from school after 12 or one o'clock, and lunch consisted invariably of cauliflower soup, followed by pancakes with jam and then by the two hour long English lesson. I hated Wednesdays. Many years later, in Wisconsin, I told my mother how much I hated this particular lunch. She shook her head in wonder and said: "But you never said a thing." I answered her with a question: "Would it have helped?" She thought for a short moment and then she said: "No." Since after the war I had to learn so much in order to graduate from high school, or rather gymnasium, (which was an eight year continuation of education after finishing grade school and a requirement for the entrance to the university), I never tried to improve my English pronunciation. By the time I came to the U.S., I was 33 years old and my Czech accent was too strongly entrenched. I had to learn too many things, so I had no time to worry about my accent. It somehow did not seem to bother my students at UIC.

In the summer of 1934 we went to Italy and stayed with my mother's half-sister Ella and her husband, Father's uncle Karel Münz. By-and-large we all had a good time there; I actually have a photo from that summer showing all of us on a trip to Lago Maggiore. The only problem was that almost every day we went to the beach, where my parents would climb over the shark nets and swim in the sea while I sat on the beach in great fear that my parents would be eaten by a shark. These fears were not exactly alleviated when some sailors brought in a shark and my father tried to buy a shark tooth. Even the delicious lunches that my aunt Ella packed for me (they owned a delicatessen store), did not help much, though, as is typical for me, I remember them till this day.

In 1938 I finished grade school and enrolled in Benesovo Statni gymnasium in Praha, Londynska 29. My father believed in "classical" education, and the school he had selected for me stressed classical languages. Like in every gymnasium, German was taught from the first and Latin from third grade. However, while in the fifth grade most schools introduced another modern language, most commonly French, our gymnasium taught ancient Greek. The gymnasium was called "classical" to be distinguished from the much more favored "real" gymnasiums. None of the girls from my grade school attended "my" gymnasium and so I had lost contact with my

grade school friends before I formed any friendships in my gymnasium. Suddenly I, who always had a bunch of friends found myself sort of isolated.

Horovice

Horovice, the small town where my mother was born and where my grandmother Jana and my uncle lived, occupies a very special place among my memories. I loved the weekends and summers in Horovice in my grandmother's villa. There were kittens and a large garden full of fruit trees. My uncle Jan Bondy would give me a bit of money to buy plants such as daisies or pansies. I would plant them around the fruit trees. Once I remember being beset by a decorating mania; I bought rolls of pink crepe paper and decorated the long entrance corridor of the villa with it. It must have been at a time when my mother was in Prague with my father since she would have never stood for such nonsense. In Horovice I got to play with the children from the neighboring village of Tlustice; they were children of factory workers. Their families owned little one story houses with gardens; they kept chickens and rabbits. In their homes I ate bread with margarine and perhaps some cheese and they in turn ate bread with butter and ham in our villa. I remember that one of the children once stated that at "Plevno" (that was my grandparents' house unofficial name) even the water tasted better. I enjoyed those sandwiches in their houses as much as they enjoyed those in the villa. We used to play all kinds of silly games, for example having a store in which we used all kinds of plants, fruits and grasses to represent various vegetables. Sometimes we would find a dead mouse or little bird and give them elaborate funerals. In the early spring, when the snow started to melt, I would take the small coal shovel from the kitchen and spend a lot of time rearranging the flow of the water from the melting snow and occasionally trying to float a little paper boat on such a stream. But actually I did not like the very early spring very much and waited impatiently for the arrival of real spring with violets and primroses, followed by lilac bushes blooming in great profusion under the kitchen and dining room windows.

The "Villa Bondy" was a two story building. On the ground floor was a large kitchen, where the family ate when my father was not present. When he was in Horovice my grandmother (that is my maternal grandmother who adored him and never called him anything other than Vitousek) had all the meals served in the dining room, which adjoined the kitchen. There was an alcove separated from the dining room by a hanging carpet. It was in this alcove that the Christmas tree was placed every year; the hanging carpet would be removed after the Christmas Eve dinner and

the beautifully wrapped gifts under the shining and decorated tree would be revealed. Even when I was little I knew that the gifts came from my parents, my uncle, my mother's friend my "aunt" Jindra, and from Artur Fishmann.

My grandmother "Babicka" Jana, who became a young widow when my mother, her oldest child, was 7 years old and her three younger children, all boys, ranged from 6 to about 2. She apparently did not think that this was enough work and started inviting a little boy from the Prague Jewish orphanage. His name was Artur Fishmann and he was about 15 years older than I and continued visiting my grandmother's place even as a young adult. Since his childhood holidays were spent with my grandmother, he also got used to the family customs of celebrating Christmas and dyeing eggs at Easter time. I remember that he gave me once one of the very few German books I owned; it was called "The Bee Maya" and I am sorry to say that I have no recollection of having ever read it. I really loved Artur; we called him Turek, and he is in my memory truly a member of my family. He eventually studied law and upon graduation worked for a short time in my father's law office. Around 1940 Artur Fishmann married, and lived with his wife Dita (Edith) in Prague. Like so many others, he and Dita perished somewhere in the East.

But to continue with the description of the villa: next to the dining room was a large room, called "the salon." It housed an old grand piano, some plants (including a large oleander), and a stand with marble top and more plants. There was a sofa with matching easy chairs and an ornate coffee table and, as in all the other rooms, a huge ceramic stove. There was also a collection of old guns, and two large oil paintings, one of my grandfather and one of grandmother Jana hanging on the wall above the sofa. In order to avoid turning the guns in during the Nazi occupation, they were thrown down the well in the factory yard. In the center of the room hung an elaborate crystal chandelier. The salon had four entrances, one from the dining room, one from a verandah (porch) accessible from the garden, one from the front entrance hall and one from the master bedroom; that door was kept closed, particularly if there were guests in the house. Every year during the warm months swallows built a nest on the crystal chandelier above the large oriental carpet and so Babicka, who believed that the swallows bring luck to the house, left the door to the verandah open and the huge oriental carpet was protected by thick layers of old newspapers. By the way, that carpet was saved for us during the war by Zdena Lastovkova's father together with one of the easy chairs. Jan and I mutilated that chair after the war, since we did not like the old fashioned fabric covering, and so we reupholstered it with some bright red artificial leather!

Babicka normally slept in the master bedroom. When I was in Horovice without my parents, I slept with her in a little bed under an old fashioned clock, something like a grandfathers clock but shorter, with an elaborate machinery, chains and weights. When my parents were there, Babicka vacated the master bedroom for them and moved to uncle Honza's adjacent bedroom, which had an extra bed. Honza's bedroom had another two doors, one led to a corridor which had an entrance to the cellar. The corridor continued to the main entrance hall. The other door from the room led to a little pantry, which had a window that used to be open all the time. There my grandmother kept the numerous jars of her home made preserves.

Along the front of the villa, facing the factory, was a long narrow corridor which led to the toilet, which once upon a time was actually a flushing toilet, but from when I can remember, it had to be flushed with a bucket of water which was always kept ready. The water was brought in a large wooden vessel from a well in the factory complex. There were washstands in the bedrooms and water was heated in the kitchen. In order to bathe, one had to go across the street to a laundry building, which contained a big kettle for heating water as well as a bathtub. However as a child I was always bathed in the kitchen in a small wooden tub with the water heated on the kitchen stove. There was also a very small swimming pool (really small) in the factory building. It was not heated and the only person I remember who swam or rather plunged into it was my father, who every year on New Year's morning, snow or no snow, would put on a bathing suit and run barefooted around the villa and then across the road into the factory and submerge himself in the cold water.

There was a stone staircase to the upper floor, which was arranged exactly like the ground floor. As far as I can remember, the only room that was frequently used was the one above my uncle's room, in which my aunt Jindra and her son Zdenek always stayed. For reasons I didn't know and I never questioned, it was called "the Nest." At Christmas time Jindra and Zdenek had their own Christmas tree in their room, in addition to the one in the dining room downstairs.

Babicka had a stroke when I was, I think, in the third grade. It happened in Prague and I vaguely remember that she stayed with us until she recovered and only then went back to Horovice. After that, as far as I was concerned, everything was back to normal.

I guess you could say that I always had some sort of nesting tendency. In our Horovice garden there was an old gazebo and I tried very hard to repair it. I used remains of old boxes and layers of old newspapers in order to make it "livable" but I never succeeded.

Another family activity in Horovice was mushroom gathering. I used to go mushroom hunting with both parents. When I was very little, father used to carry me on his shoulders, but as soon as we reached the forest he had to put me down.

I remember one incident which for some reason made a lasting impression on me: I was always fond of cats and dogs. At that time I had neither, though there was always a surplus of kittens in Horovice. Once I got hold of a kitten, dressed it in my doll's dress and put it in my small doll carriage. Mr. Stejskal, who at that time functioned as a guard of the now closed factory (it must have been probably around 1933), saw me with the kitten and very angrily ordered me to release it immediately, which I did, but I ran to my mother right away to complain; Mother, however, said that Mr. Stejskal was absolutely right.

Much later, during the war, my "aunt" Jindra used to go to Horovice trying to get some food, which at the time was rationed. (She used to send us food packages to Theresienstadt. Some, of course got lost, but some made it.) On one such trip she met Mr. Stejskal and asked him how he was doing. Mr. Stejskal said: "Mrs. Schicrova, they tell me that all my life I was exploited by the Jews. But my life will never be as good as it was during that time." After the war, upon our return from the camps, Mr. Stejskal, a member of the Communist Party, told my mother: "Young mistress, sell the whole thing (the villa and the factory), they (meaning the Communists) will take it from you." For him my mother always was the "young mistress." The "mistress" was my grandmother who at that time had been dead for seven years. So as soon as I became the owner the villa and the defunct factory (I was the heiress according to my grandmother's will), Mother sold it to the local butcher. Two years later the state confiscated it. When we returned to Czechoslovakia in 1990, the factory was nonexistent and the villa in virtual ruins. I am certain that I idealize my stay in Horovice, but it was a totally carefree time: I could run in the garden, pick fruit, use my swing, later even ride around on a bicycle (a second hand one, but mine). I had my two tortoises there, in the winter they hibernated in the cellar, but the rest of the year they spent in a pen in the garden and lived on lettuce leaves. Periodically they would dig under the pen and go for a walk in the fields. However the

villagers would always find them and bring them back to us. After the occupation we donated them to the village school.

German Occupation.

In 1938, even before my graduation from grade school, Hitler demanded that Czechoslovakia cede to Germany the border area of the republic referred to as Sudetenland, which admittedly had a large number of German speaking Czechoslovak citizens. Czechoslovakia mobilized and at that point I believe the nation was more than ready to fight and defend itself. Certainly my father was. Though his attitude was very anti-militaristic, he felt strongly, that Czechoslovakia should not yield to Nazi Germany. The defenses on the border were well built and even pacifists like my dad were ready to fight the Nazis. The army was very well equipped and the people of this otherwise peaceful nation were truly ready to defend their country. I remember coming home one day from school crying, because we were told in school, that there was a mobilization and so we thought that there would be a war. When I got home I found my mother packing a little suitcase for my father; she told me that father went to enlist even though he was not called up; he was a reservc lieutenant. She told me that she was going to spank me if I did not stop crying. However, in a few hours Father came back home, very unhappy, since he had been rejected; he had claimed that he had been called up, but that he had lost the card, but they obviously did not believe him. He was 40 years old and only in the second reserve.

Czechoslovakia's ally France joined with Great Britain, and they pressured Czechoslovakia to yield to Germany and give up the border territories (with all the country's defenses) in order to "save world peace." President Benes yielded to the pressure by Chamberlain and Daladier (the prime ministers of England and France). He then resigned and escaped to London. The army was demobilized and a gloom settled over the country. Thus the Nazi regime got not only a lot of military equipment but also the excellent munition plant of the Skoda factory in Pilsen. All the defense fortifications on the Czczhoslovak borders were in the area ceded to Germany. I am sorry to add that Poland and Hungary hurried to occupy the Czechoslovak areas adjacent to their respective countries.

We had one more vacation on the sea shore in the summer of 1938. This one was in Yugoslavia in a resort called Crikvenica. Nobody could have predicted that nine years later I would spend my honeymoon on that same beach.

On March 15, 1939, Hitler's troops marched into Prague with no resistance from the Czech people. That was the end of Masaryk's Czechoslovakia, for a time the most advanced country in that part of the world. It had lasted only 20 years. I feel that the demise of Masaryk's Czechoslovakia actually marked the end of my childhood.

The day Hitler rolled into Prague I was in the middle of my first year of gymnasium. I remember that day very well: on my way to school, I saw people crying in the streets. When I got to the classroom everybody sat in their place quietly like at a funeral. As we waited for the professor, everybody looked gloomy and we were all silent. Finally one of the boys, Jiri Para, got up, walked to the blackboard and wrote: "Do not lose your courage even when they are shitting on your head." He is the only boy from that class I will never forget. I never saw him after the war and I have no idea what happened to him.

Before the Nazi occupation I went to various gym classes and even to a ballet school, but I was never too good in gym and sports, though till today I am a reliable (though slow) swimmer. As it turned out, swimming became pretty important in my later life. As far as ballet was concerned, it actually led to the only case in my entire life of deceiving my parents: during the Nazi occupation, I could no longer attend the ballet school. So my parents decided to have me take private lessons. Unfortunately I discovered a pile of mysteries in my ballet teacher's bathroom and I used to spend a lot of time reading those instead of dancing. I always read a lot (not just mysteries). I also practiced piano playing willy-nilly with my mother sitting by my side, though she had no idea about music. I even started French lessons, but those were quickly ended by the Nazi invasion. However, I continued with my piano lessons practically up to the day of the deportation.

During the first years of the occupation, summers and many weekends were still spent mostly in Horovice, though my maternal grandmother had died on Christmas of 1938, and my uncle Honza now lived there alone.

I am not quite sure when I actually got my first dog Jolly. It definitely happened after things started to get bad. Father did not like dogs or cats, but around the time of the Nazi occupation he allowed me to accept it from a butcher in Tlustice from whom, when we were in Babicka's villa, we bought meat. This is how it came about: There was a small circus visiting the village of Tlustice. (My grandmother's

villa was approximately halfway between Horovice and Tlustice.) The butcher was a generous man and apparently gave some meat to the circus people, who then gave him a pregnant wire-haired fox terrier dog. The terrier had four puppies. One day when we were in Horovice and went to buy some meat, the butcher offered to let us pick one of the puppies. Father, much to our surprise, called out "Jolicku (little Jolly), Jolicku" to the liveliest puppy which started to toddle towards him; he then let me accept the gift.

Poor Jolly had a complicated life. It all started when we, as Jews, were prohibited to own pets. We had to turn them in or to present a certificate that the pet had been killed. We gave Jolly to aunt Jindra complete with his favorite easy chair. My mother then went to a pet shelter where she selected a dog which looked as though somewhere in the distant past one of his ancestors might have been a wire haired fox terrier. She then proceeded to take the animal to some veterinarian who did not know our Jolly, with the intention of having the poor dog euthanized instead of Jolly. She was so upset over the entire thing that she appeared at the vet's office in tears. The vet said: "Just give me 10 Crowns and I will give you a certificate that I killed your dog. But I promise you that I will find a good home for it." She was very glad that the poor dog could be saved, thanked the vet and was about to leave when the vet asked her: "You forgot to tell me the dog's name." Mother, of course, did not know his name, but quickly came up with a clever response: "His name is Tumas." "Tu mas" meaning something like "here you are" or "come and get it" is how one in Czech would call an animal to get food - and she was quite sure that any dog would respond to this name.

On March 15, 1939 the day the Nazi army marched into Prague, my father was, like all the Czechoslovak Jewish lawyers, immediately forbidden from further practicing law. This prohibition appeared so soon after the German invasion that it must have been issued by the right-wing Czech government (which assumed power after Munich and President Benes' departure) even before a German directive could have been received. I am sad to have to conclude that it must have been prepared even before the invasion at the behest of some of the Czech lawyers who were eager to get rid of the Jewish competition. My father shared his office with two other lawyers; the senior partner was father's distant cousin, Otto Popper, and the junior partner was Dr. Kautsky (as university graduates, lawyers in Czechoslovakia used the title Doctor), who was a gentile. Otto, who was Jewish, managed to get a visitors visa to the USA, but left his wife behind. She perished in the Holocaust. Dr Kautsky was a brave and decent man: he allowed my father to continue his practice. At one point

Father was summoned by the Gestapo, because a disgruntled secretary denounced him and reported that he was illegally continuing his practice. I learned what happened, only after Father returned safely home. I don't know how he managed to defend himself, but I always assumed, that probably his demeanor and supposedly "Aryan" looks helped. He was very handsome, tall and blond. Upon his return, he told us that while he was waiting there he observed an unlucky Jew who was just being released, but at the last moment the Gestapo agent decided to search him. He found only a toothbrush, but that was enough for the Gestapo to declare that the man "had a bad conscience", since he prepared himself for being detained, and to arrest him.

I finished only the first two years of the gymnasium before I, like all other Jewish students, was kicked out. All the students and all the teachers with one exception treated me well. The exception was the natural science teacher, named Hnevkovsky. He was a fascist and an anti-Semite. As if that wasn't bad enough for me, he also had a good reason to hate my mother. He came from the same region as my mother and at a county ball in Beroun she had publicly slapped him in the face. I asked her why she did it and she told me only that he was being fresh. When my mother went to school to inquire about my progress, she met Mr. Hnevkovsky and they recognized each other immediately. So now he had two reasons to hate me: not only was I Jewish but my mother had publicly humiliated him. This, of course, was a challenge for me and so I was always perfectly prepared for his class. He would make rude anti-Semitic comments, but in the end I always got an "A." One day he was lecturing on some primitive prehistoric creatures and next time he asked a question which nobody could understand. In a feeble attempt to jolt our memory, he told us that the name of the creature in question was similar to the name of an ancient panskavic god. I got his stupid message and I said: "Triglav (the old Slavic god of prophesy with three heads) and trilobite." That was the correct answer, but the way he praised me was, I think, remarkable. He said: "I am used to the sad fact that if I ask a question about natural history, the only person in the entire class who knows the correct answer is a Jew. But when I ask a question about our panskavic mythology and the only person who knows the correct answer is a Jewess, admittedly one with an outstanding record, that is something for which you, the entire class, should be ashamed." Surprisingly I received an A in the natural history on the final report card. It was the last report card for the next five years. In the fall of 1940 all Jewish students were kicked out of all schools. Our school principal asked my mother to come to school, apologized for what they were forced to do and told her they regret-

ted that they had to expel all the Jewish students but that they particularly regretted losing two upperclassmen and me.

Our parents arranged for small private courses, in my group ("circle") we were perhaps 6 or 7. Jewish teachers were found, not necessarily people trained as teachers, but people knowledgeable in a particular field. And so we continued our study of the Czech language and mathematics and started learning about chemistry (I actually learned to balance chemical equations then and there) and learned some fundamentals of Latin. A few years ago in Australia, I met the man, Ota Wachtel, who taught me mathematics at that time. I recognized just his name, but he did not remember me.

Before the German occupation Mother had a live-in-maid and a cleaning woman who came in once or twice a week, but Mother did the shopping and cooking herself. After we were no longer allowed to employ anybody (about 1940) I became the dish washer and I cleaned the carpets.

While in Prague I still continued my piano lessons. Rafael Schächter had another student whose parents emigrated to Prague from Vienna. His name was Honza Tausik and he used to have his lesson just before mine. Pretty soon he began to wait for me and walk me home. He was tall, somewhat redhead and freckled. We also used to meet on the Hagibor playground. Hagibor was a Jewish sport club with a playground located near the Jewish cemetery in the part of Prague called Vinohrady. I started to frequent Hagibor after Jewish youth and children were forbidden from entering public parks and playgrounds. I was never very good at sports - I could swim fairly well, but that was about all. On the Hagibor playground I used to play volleyball, certainly more enthusiastically than skillfully. I also used to meet Honza Tausik there and he would walk me home pushing his bicycle of which he was extraordinarily proud. At the time I also acquired my first Jewish girlfriend - Eva Steiner. She had dark hair like I, but hers was braided in two impressive long plaits. We both were freckled and wore glasses. I think that Honza Tausik was not quite sure in which of us he was actually interested. I remember my 15th birthday. I invited all classmates from my "circle" and my mother made some refreshments. Honza Tausik gave me a little chain bracelet with small animal pendants and stole a photo of me. That made me very happy. I might add that we never even held hands. He was deported in June of 1942 in a transport labeled AAh. I remember standing by the window and crying. When, in Theresienstadt two years later, I started dating my Honza, he told me that Honza Tausik had been his fellow student in the chemistry

course he had attended. By then we knew that the AAH transport bypassed Terezin and went straight "East."

Sometime in 1941 we had to start wearing yellow stars and in the fall of that year the transports started, first to Lodz and later to Terezin (Theresienstadt). Fellow students from my "circle" started vanishing on the transports one by one. My grandfather Porges died in 1941; he used to live with Father's sister Anna, Uncle Vilem Werner and my cousin Edvard (Eda). Shortly after my grandfather's death the Werners had to give up their apartment and moved into ours in Trojanova street. I was very fond of my cousin Eda Werner, and we got along very well. He was just a year younger than I. Unfortunately, the Werners did not live with us for too long; they soon vanished in the East never to be heard off again.

We had to make room for them and for their furniture. My mother stopped a coal delivery wagon on the street and paid him to deliver our dining room furniture and some other objects to Mr. Stepanek's (Zdena Lastovkova's father) Prague store-house. Mr. Stepanek had been married to my mother's half-sister, who had died of cancer many years earlier. This furniture was returned to us after the war. Dr. Kautsky also returned Father's office furniture to us.

After my piano teacher, Rafael Schächter, was deported to Theresienstadt with the second transport (AK2), I continued my piano lessons with his girlfriend Erna Grünfeld. She lived only a couple of houses from us and I was told that she and Mr. Schächter could not get married, because she was half Jewish and had she married him, she would have also be subjected to deportation. As long as we had a radio (later we had to turn it in) Erna, one of her sisters, and Lisa Klein (the older sister of Gideon Klein, a very talented musician, who perished in the Holocaust) used to come to our apartment to listen illegally to broadcasts from England. I used to be sent to the kitchen to prepare tea and if it was too weak, Erna would derogatorily call it "Maricka Magdonova's pee." (Maricka Magdonova was a character in a patriotic poem by the poet Petr Bezruc. Bezruc later became a Communist, as did Ms. Grünfeld.)

A friend of these people was E. A. Saudek, who was married to the daughter of the famous Czech poet Jaroslav Vrchlicky. Saudek was Jewish but was at that time protected from deportation because his wife was a gentile. Saudek decided to perform Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream" using his own recent translation (the play was actually translated several times before and after) in the Prague Jewish

Orphanage. Somehow he could not find a satisfactory Titania among the children in the orphanage, someone suggested me, and I got the role. I was thrilled and quickly memorized the role. It seemed that I was best when Titania argued with Oberon, but I did not do so well in the love scenes. Anyway, I never got to play in a performance, because I was sent to Theresienstadt before the play was performed.

I mentioned Artur Fishmann in the description of my family. While he was not a blood relation, he was really like a family member. After his wedding there was a big party in the Jewish orphanage. Artur (Turek) gave my mother a big bouquet of red roses with a card that said: to my dear mother, Turek. I remember the party well: I actually got to dance with the poet Jiri Orten whose little brother lived in the orphanage and - in the Midsummer Night's Dream - played the role of Puck. When I was about eleven, my parents invited a girl from the Jewish orphanage to spend the summer with us in Horovice. I am ashamed to admit that I was actually jealous of her because once, when my father was reading a newspaper and she wanted his attention, she just hit the paper he was holding and Father did not act angrily and immediately started talking to her. I knew that he would not have tolerated it had I done the same; by coincidence it was this girl who inherited my role of Titania and actually got to play it. She vanished somewhere in Auschwitz or possibly beyond. In Theresienstadt my mother and I shared a room with the mother of my "Oberon-to-be," the boy who, in the role of Oberon, would have been my partner in the play, for a short time.

Terezin

In July of 1942 my father was put in the AAv transport; I was in the reserve of the same transport and my mother was not called. I don't really remember packing and getting to the old exhibition palace where the long journey towards death for most of the Jewish population of Prague began. Even though I was with Father I was totally unhinged by the separation from Mother. I do not have any recollection of the time spent in the gathering place or of the train ride to Theresienstadt or even of our arrival in Theresienstadt, where I was, of course, separated even from Father. I vaguely remember being housed with some ladies from Germany and then meeting Father and hanging on to him in the street in Theresienstadt. I know that Mother came a week later with the next transport AAw. Mother was told by the Jewish official who actually drew up the deportation lists, that I had bawled him out so vehemently for sending me - a little girl - without her mother, that he had to put her into the next transport. Some favor!

I don't remember when I started working. My first job was to wash public toilets. I do not recall being terribly unhappy being assigned to this particular job, but I think I did not stay with it too long. From that job I remember only one funny encounter: an elderly gentleman, after having used the toilet, asked me in German where I was from. I told him I was from Prague and asked him where he was from. When he told me that he was from Vienna I told him that I had an uncle in Vienna and that perhaps he might have known him. He said: "Little girl, Vienna is a very large city." I said: "But my uncle is Karl Franz Bondy." The gentleman said: "Are you telling me that a niece of Karl Franz Bondy is washing toilets in Theresienstadt?" I just said: "Yes."

Very shortly after arriving in Theresienstadt I moved to the "Jugendheim" for girls. I enjoyed my stay in L410 (that was the "street number" of the home for young girls, "L" standing for "lange" - long streets, while the cross streets were labeled Q for "quer"). I was also assigned to a new job in the "Jugendlandwirtschaft" (youth agriculture). The youngsters in that group ranged, if my memory does not fail me, from something like 13 to perhaps 16 years old. Though I do not remember being extremely hungry, we were always in search of something to eat. We were at that time assigned to turn a part of the grassy ramparts surrounding Theresienstadt into land ready for planting. We were supervised by a Mr. Werner, who was a fellow prisoner and a very knowledgeable farmer who used to own a large farm in Germany; he survived the war, emigrated to Israel and lived into the 1990s. Mr. Werner taught us how to turn soil in two layers two spades deep. It was not very easy, but he was a nice and reasonable guy and I actually enjoyed the work. I remember once digging up some kind of a cache of small roots and afterwards peeling and tasting one, sharing it with those of my new friends who were willing to take the risk. I also vaguely remember tending some garden plots with various vegetables.

There was a small redhead girl, two years younger than I, who was talking about her older brother all the time, reciting poems he had taught her and in general extolling his virtues. Little did I know that five years later I would marry her brother and that by then she, both her parents, my father and many other close relatives and friends would be dead.

I enjoyed my stay in the "Jugendheim." I probably clowned a lot. I liked reciting poetry including long passages from Shakespeare's "Midsummer Night's Dream,"

which I had memorized at the time when I was learning the role of Titania. I entertained my fellow roommates by reciting my role whether they liked it or not.

This relatively peaceful time for me ended abruptly when one day in December I awoke with a severe headache and a very swollen eye. It turned out to be a severe sinus infection. I went to the hospital where they first tried to open my sinuses using punctures and treating me with a sulfonamide named Prontosil but everything failed and not only was I in great pain but I also had a very high fever. Eventually Dr. Tarjan, a nose and ear specialist, decided that only surgery could help. He made a small opening into my right sinus, but that did not work either and so the physicians decided, that the only way to save me was to perform a major surgery called a Ritter-Jansen operation. This meant that they would remove a narrow part of my forehead and so damaged part of my right eyebrow and made a cut a bit over an inch down my nose. This was done under local anesthesia and when, at one point, I asked Dr. Tarjan whether the worst was behind me, he said: "Yes, if you consider Dr. Schlanger the worst, then yes, he is standing just behind you." Dr. Schlanger was Dr. Tarjan's assistant. It was claimed that Dr. Tarjan was trained in the U. S. as an oral surgeon. There is no doubt that he saved my life. I much later learned from Jan that Dr. Tarjan also operated on him to treat his ear infection. Both Dr. Tarjan and Dr. Schlanger vanished in Auschwitz or perhaps beyond in October 1944.

I stayed in the hospital till April 1943. The hospital supplies were very inadequate and so used bandages were washed, dried and then given to me and I rolled them up and at the same time removed the remnants of the bone that had not been washed out. Then they were sterilized and used again.

In the hospital I met another patient, Marianne von Rücker-Hütte. She was a beautiful young woman. Her husband, a minor German nobleman, divorced her and took their only child, a little girl, with him. She was very unhappy, but was very good to me, talked to me a lot and told me her sad story. What she did not tell me was that she became a drug addict and stole morphine from the meager hospital supply. After I was released from the hospital I lost all contact with her, but I met her once again, after the war, in Prague actually in the Krakovska street where Mother and I - and after my marriage also Honza - lived till our escape from Czechoslovakia. She looked shockingly ill, no longer beautiful, but had her little girl with her. We talked a little but I never saw her again and I do not remember what happened to her husband.

While I was in the hospital my father, who was not working, visited me a lot. In order to stop the spreading of his tuberculosis the physicians collapsed the infected half of his lung. My mother would come every time she could get away from work. One day my mother came in looking particularly sad. She had gone to the room in the home for the young girls where I lived until my hospitalization. She was in a state of shock: about one half or possibly more of the young girls with whom I had shared the room had died of typhoid. At that point Mother decided that I must not go back to the young girls' home, but that I had to live with her. She managed to arrange it so that we shared (with two other ladies) a very tiny room in a house just across the street from the hospital where both my father and my mother's younger brother Honza Bondy (the one that had polio as a child and consequently spent the rest of his life in a wheel chair) were staying.

I believed that the fact that we remained in Theresienstadt until the fall of 1944 as well as the way Mother could get us the little room so close to the hospital were both thanks to a very good friend of my father, Dr. Altenstein. Dr. Altenstein was an important official in the Department of Justice before the destruction of the first Czechoslovak Republic. He was deported to Theresienstadt fairly early and while he was not a member of the Council of Elders, he was in a position to help some people. (He eventually ended like all but two of the Theresienstadt "prominent" in the gas chambers of Auschwitz). Some people in important positions were able to protect members of their families from the transports to Auschwitz until September 1944. I do not know what the rules or limits for such protection were or if they even were any rules, but I have always assumed that our protector must have been Dr. Altenstein, who was a bachelor and lived with a widowed sister and her two daughters. Funnily enough, after the war I never asked my mother whether my assumption was correct. I got the answer to this question only many years later while we were living in Chicago, when Jan and I attended a performance of a children's opera "Brundibar." This opera was composed by Hans Krasa and performed a number of times in Theresienstadt; Krasa was one of the many talented artists who perished because they were Jewish. After the performance in Chicago's Blackstone Theatre the audience was asked whether there were any former prisoners of Theresienstadt. Even though the theatre was full, only three people got up. Jan and myself and another gentleman. We were invited to come to meet the lady who traveled with the theater group, lecturing, and who, as a small child, sang the role of the cat in the original Theresienstadt production. The lady, Ela Weissberger, spoke first to the gentleman and then I approached her, introduced myself and told her my maiden name. This Czech Jewish lady exclaimed: "Jesus Maria" and embraced me. I said: "You know,

there were two girls named Eva Porgesova, one had dark hair and the other was blond. I am the dark haired one." She said: "It is you, I am a niece of Dr. Altenstein." She remembered where I lived and then proceeded to tell me things that, to my shame, I had forgotten. She told me that she used to come with her uncle to our apartment in Prague where my father and her uncle played chess. I did not even remember that my father played chess. She also told me that when she, her sister, and her widowed mother had to move from Sudetenland when Nazi Germany occupied it in 1938, and that my father had been very helpful to them. I then asked her whether it was her uncle who kept us in Theresienstadt till October 1944 and she told me that my assumption was correct.

When my parents led me from the hospital, we met Mr. Schächter. He took one look at me and said: "Evicko come and sing in my chorus." So from then on I spent much of the time after work singing with Mr. Schächter. During the time I sang in the chorus we performed Smetana's operas "The Bartered Bride" and "The Kiss" as well as Mozart's "Marriage of Figaro" and Verdi's "Requiem." My cousin Harry Pisinger also sang in the chorus.

After I recovered, I went back to working in agriculture, "Landwirtschaft," - no longer the group for young children, but for adults (16 or older). Our group worked outside the ghetto in the surrounding fields. Of course all of us kids tried to bring back some vegetables for our parents and the challenge was how to do it. I had a wide skirt which I wore over shorts. My mother put rubber bands into the leg openings of my shorts. Thus I could fairly safely bring a few carrots, tomatoes or potatoes into the ghetto. The Czech gendarmes never checked us and most of them probably could not care less if we brought a few vegetables, which were intended for the Germans, into the ghetto to our families. When I knew that we were going to work close to the greenhouse where my cousin Harry Pisinger worked and where they grew cucumbers, I would put on a bra, which I really did not need but which was very well suited for hiding a cucumber.

At about that time my Prague friend Eva Steiner was diagnosed with tuberculosis and hospitalized and we sort of drifted apart. At work I found a new friend (another Eva) whose name was Goldschmied; she was not from Prague but from Nachod. Through her I met two of her friends, Tom Löwenbach (now Luke) and Honza Bondy, who was no relative of mine though he had the same name as my mother's younger brother (the one who was a polio victim confined to a wheelchair and who died in Theresienstadt).

Once we were bringing a cart of vegetables into the ghetto. The delivery place was in a courtyard which was reached through a gate and a covered passage. The trick was to have the vegetables weighed and thus get credit for turning them in and then, if possible, steal a few. Both Eva and I stole a few carrots and I also took a very small head of red cabbage because I knew that it was Father's favorite vegetable. Since we were already in the ghetto and thus were not passing through any checkpoints, I started ahead of Eva merrily swinging my head scarf in which I was carrying the vegetables. As I exited the gate I saw one of the worst SS men in Theresienstadt, Heindl, just passing by. I panicked. Had I ignored him and proceeded, he probably would not have noticed me, but I stepped back behind the gate and dropped the scarf with the vegetables. He followed me, stopped me and before he started yelling I said (in German): "Excuse me, please, just one moment" and then I ran back and said to our supervisor, a girl in her early twenties or so: "Gertie, I just got caught by Heindl." Meanwhile my friend Eva Goldschmied, who had been walking just behind me was caught by Heindl as well. Gertie stepped forward and said: "I am responsible for these girls." Heindl then ordered us to march in front of him. I was certain that if nothing else we would be beaten up and I asked Eva if she thought that I should take off my glasses. Heindl shouted at me to shut up, which I, of course, did. As our sad procession marched on, Tom Löwenbach (Luke) and Honza Bondy saw us and started approaching us until they noticed that we were signaling with our heads that we were being escorted by an SS guy. They quickly retreated and went to notify our parents. My mother later told me that she was close to a heart attack when a couple of boys unknown to her found her at work and told her: "Excuse us, but your daughter had just been picked up by Heindl."

This dramatic situation had an incredibly lucky ending: as we were marching, we encountered a Jewish ghetto policeman and Heindl passed us to him, told him of our transgression and ordered him to make sure that we were severely punished. The policeman took us (I do not exactly remember where, but of course, inside the ghetto) probably to the ghetto police headquarters where the Jewish policemen locked us up. I do not remember the exact sequence of the following events. The ghetto authorities staged a trial. My father was quite impressed by the performance of the defense attorney assigned to us by the ghetto authorities. It was Zev Scheck, who survived the war, emigrated to Palestine and later became Israel's ambassador to Italy. Prague was really a rather small world. I heard later that after the war he married a girl with whom I, as a little girl before I even started school, attended

YWCA exercise classes. However she and I never became friends, not even after we met again as teenagers in Theresienstadt, and have never had any contact.

My friend Eva Goldschmied was sentenced to one day and I to two days in jail. I do not know till today, whether my longer sentence was due to the red cabbage or to my stupidity which attracted Heindl's attention. Our stay in the ghetto prison was quite fun. We had visits from various boys and we were very happy with the outcome, considering the possible serious consequences that could have taken place. However, Eva complained that as we had to share a bunk on the one night we were both incarcerated, I kept on putting my legs across her and when she objected, I just mumbled: "Sorry, but tonight I am sleeping in your bed." In December my friend Eva Goldschmied was sent on with a transport to Auschwitz. She did not survive the war and neither did my first "Eva" friend, Eva Steiner. Both will live forever in my memory.

My last Theresienstadt girlfriend was Eva Sternschuss. We met through our work in the "Landwirtschaft". I remember that in the summer of 1944 we worked together on a large field of tomato plants. That was a great job: on our way to work we used to pass through an apple tree alley and there was always hope that we could find an apple. We also could eat as many tomatoes as we wanted and even smuggle some home to our families. Later that year I worked in a potato field, which was great, though transporting potatoes covered with soil in your underpants is no great fun.

Once on our way to work we saw some prisoners from the so-called Small Fortress working in the moat deep below the trail we were on and we threw them our meager lunches. We knew that they were much worse off than we. Theresienstadt's Small Fortress was a terrible prison for political prisoners. Sometimes people from the ghetto were sent there as punishment, most of the time never to be heard of again.

Once, we were about 15 to 17 young people working on the bank of the river Ohre (German Eger) weeding a huge field and it was very hot. So we got the crazy idea that the next day we would put on only shorts and T-shirts and go for a swim in the river. Our supervisor Mr. Werner, the German Jewish farmer, as well as the Czech gendarme who was guarding us, let us be, but the festivities ended when the German supervisor Kurzawy came riding on a horse and started shouting his head off. Actually that was all he did. There was no punishment for anybody. I learned

after the war that Kurzawy actually often tried to protect people whom he knew personally from the transports to the East, i.e. Auschwitz.

One more unusual thing happened when we worked in the tomato field. There were two sisters, twins, which were from a so-called mixed marriage. The mother was a gentile and she did not divorce her husband and thus protected him from the transports. However, she could not protect her own children. One day the gendarme, who was supposed to guard us, brought her to the field and let her spend the day with her daughters. Fortunately it was not discovered and so there were no dire consequences.

Honza

In May of 1944 there were several large transports sent from Theresienstadt. Everyone who was called for transports had to report to the Hamburg barrack a day before; from there they were loaded into trains the next day and shipped to what we called "the East," not knowing, of course, the real destination and fate awaiting them. After I came back from work I organized a bunch of girls somewhat younger than myself. We got hold of a pushcart and used it to help older people to carry their luggage to the place in the Hamburg barrack where they were to spend their last night in Theresienstadt. Towards the end, when it appeared that there was no more work to be done, because almost everybody in the transport had already arrived, I let the girls go and then I helped an elderly person to carry his or her luggage by myself. That suitcase turned out to be a bit too heavy for me and so I asked some boy who was just passing by for help. He did so for a short time, but then someone called him away and so I dragged the suitcase myself until I found another guy, with whom I then delivered the piece of luggage to its destination. After that, there was nothing more for us to do. We stood on the second floor of the barracks and we started talking. I do not remember much of the conversation, but it turned out that we both had lived in Prague, he in the suburbs and I downtown near the river. But I became interested in him when we were saying goodbye and he clicked his (bare) heels, bent from the waist down, offered me his hand and said: "If you allow me to introduce myself, I am Honza Robitschek". (Honza is the common nickname for Jan, the Czech version of John) I was very impressed. I had been friendly with several boys, but I had never actually dated anybody. Once I had been asked on a date - this was at the time before my head surgery - and the boy had tried to kiss me on our first date. I adamantly refused to be kissed and lost all interest in him and, of course, he in me; I later found out that he complained to his mother, that I was immature.

The conversation with Honza and his clicking of bare heels impressed me to no end. I was thinking about this boy who behaved so differently from all the others I knew. Then one day, I think it must have already been June, I was accompanying my friend Eva Sternschuss to a meeting with her boyfriend (who actually was my classmate for the two years I attended high school in Prague), when I noticed the red-haired and heavily freckled Honza Robitschek coming towards us on the other side of the street. I said: "Eva, let us quickly cross to the other side, I would very much like to "accidentally" meet that red-haired guy over there." And so it happened: apparently chatting with my girlfriend and not paying any attention to the approaching Honza we met him; he stopped us and started talking to us. After a short time Eva excused herself and Honza and I started walking and talking. The topic of our conversation was French impressionistic paintings. Neither of us knew anything about it, although Honza was attending a series of lectures on nineteen century art offered by Gustav Schwarzkopf (later Solar, who survived and later was a member of the Czechoslovak embassy staff, I believe in Sweden, perhaps a cultural attaché, I am not sure). Eva and I went to the next lecture and when we reached the "lecture room," a former store without its store window, the front bench was already occupied by Honza and his roommates. Eva and I stayed in the back of the room and after the lecture was over - since Honza did not seem to notice me or pay any attention to me if he did - we quickly exited with the intention of leaving. I was not willing to make any more attempts to meet that guy. What a nice surprise it was when upon exiting through the door in the back of the former store, we found Honza, who had jumped out through the window, waiting for me outside. Eva quickly excused herself and left, but Honza was immediately ambushed by the twin children of one of his several cousins, who started climbing on him; they were very cute. After he disentangled himself we proceeded to walk together, discussing what we had just learned. He eventually walked me home and asked for another date and from that time on we met about two or three times a week until he eventually kissed me on June 26, 1944. When I came "home" I started crying, I somehow felt violated by that kiss, but Mother reassured me that it was all right and sang to me a Czech song with the words "Kissing is not a sin in those years of youth." Honza also tried to sit me on his lap, but that I vehemently refused.

Some time later Honza met my parents. After I introduced him, my father's first act was to take him by an ear and proclaim to my mother: "Look Anka, he has criminal ears." Honza froze and obviously did not know how to respond to this charge, whereupon my father - after a while - added happily "Just like me." Much

later, after the war, Mother told me that after we left he told her: "This is horrible, she is going to marry him, they will read poetry on their wedding night, and I will have redhead grandchildren." We were married on June 26, 1947 about a month after I graduated from high school with straight A grades; to make father's prophesy come true, we did indeed read some poetry during our wedding night, but I failed to produce redhead children; both our sons have dark hair.

The period between June 26 and September 28 1944 was a very happy period of my life. Both my parents were alive and I was seriously in love. Honza and I met about three times a week after work, talked, read poetry, Dante's Purgatory, some translations of contemporary French poetry, and Göthe's Faust, though Jan sometimes brought a college textbook of general chemistry. He also lectured me on philosophy - he was at that time attending philosophy lectures by Gustav Schorsch and was fascinated by him. I was simply enthralled. Then one day we met a little red-haired girl with whom I had worked some time ago in Theresienstadt and I realized that Jan was that big brother whom she so adored. Meanwhile I was working in the fields and generally speaking was as happy as one could be under these circumstances.

That changed drastically and suddenly in September 1944, when 5000 young men were sent eastward and no one really knew where. Among them was not only Honza, but also my cousin Harry Pisinger, who, as we learned after the war, died in April 1945 in a horrible concentration camp, Kaufering. In August of that year he would have been 17 years old.

Auschwitz

In October 1944 my parents were placed in a transport and I volunteered to go with them. This was not really an act of bravery on my part, I simply did not want to be separated from my family. That turned to be one of the best of two decisions I made in my entire life: it saved my mother's life. The second took place only later in 1947 when I married Jan. But before that happened many events took place.

I remember almost nothing of the trip to Auschwitz-Birkenau, except that shortly before the train came to a stop my mother opened a can of sardines that she had saved all that time and gave it to me to eat.

When we arrived in Auschwitz, there was a lot of shouting, "Rauss, rauss" (get out [of the railroad cattle-cars]) and we were ordered: "The sick ones on one side, the healthy ones on the other." Father, who had tuberculosis, joined the group of sick people and at first Mother stayed with him. I did not like it and so I approached one of the prisoners in striped prisoner's clothes who was unloading the luggage and asked him: "What is that, what is going to happen to these sick people?" He just shook his head and grinned. At that moment one of the German soldiers with a dog grabbed me by the neck with the crook of his cane and dragged me in front of the SS-officer (obviously it was the infamous Dr. Mengele, but of course I did not know it at that time); when Mother saw that she immediately left Father and ran to join me. I never saw my father again. The soldier reported to the officer: "Here are two women who stayed behind with the sick." And now we stood before Mengele. He asked first whether we were mother and daughter - we answered in the affirmative - and then how old we were; we gave the true answers - 17 and 45. Forty-five was really too old for an effective slave and very few people of this age made it through the selection and most of them only by claiming to be younger. Mother was a strong, tall woman and Mengele asked her: "Wouldn't you rather to go with the sick people? It would be much more comfortable for you." Mother answered (her German was excellent): "I am strong, I can work. Please allow me to stay with my daughter." Surprisingly enough he did. Later I spoke with some girls who went through a similar situations but whose mothers were sent to the gas chambers.

While we stood and waited we saw the chimneys with flames shooting out of them. I thought that they must be steel mills and I thought to myself: "I would much rather work in the fields." We were led to a huge room and were ordered to undress completely and leave everything behind except eyeglasses. As we were undressing a female political prisoner, who heard us speaking Czech came to us and told us in Czech: "Girls, they will take everything from you. If there is something you would like to save, give it to me and I will find you later and bring it to you." I gave her my glasses, my shoe inserts (I had flat feet and was led to believe that I could not walk without them), photographs of my parents and of Honza, and also a holy picture of St. Jude Tadeus, which my "aunt" Jindra gave me before we left for Theresienstadt and which I had promised never to part with. We had our heads and entire bodies shaved, went through the showers, and received some old rags and wooden shoes; the coat had a thick red stripe painted the whole length of the back. The "new" clothes which we got after our "delousing" were already lice infested, but fortunately these lice were not infected with typhus. Later on, in order to keep some appearance of normalcy, I "changed" for the night by switching my outer and inner

garments and in the morning reversing the procedure. Of course, we never saw any of our own things again, but the Czech woman did find us and returned the things we entrusted to her. I managed to protect the pictures through the entire time and when we finally returned to Prague I proudly returned the very badly mangled picture of St. Jude Tadeus (I wore it in my wooden shoe and at times stored it in my straw mattress) to "aunt" Jindra. I think that she believed that it saved my life.

What I remember from Auschwitz was shouting, screaming, more shouting and endless roll call ("Appell"). We were counted again and again. The weather was terrible, I remember one girl fainting as we stood for hours to be counted. I also remember our first food. In Theresienstadt we had our own pots and other food containers and, of course, our own eating utensils. In Auschwitz a capo (a prisoner in a supervisory position and with almost unlimited power) threw a wash basin with some kind of watery soup at us. We were to share it among us and with another woman. We got no spoons, but had to lick it like dogs, probably to remind us that - to the Germans - we were not better than dogs, though they usually did not kill their dogs. But at this point we were not hungry. We were too upset about what happened to Father - people told us that he would be gassed, but we could not believe it. Actually it took Mother several months past the end of the war before she could accept it. The third woman with whom we were to share the soup must have been in the camp longer, because she immediately grabbed the wash basin - we did not care. But the capo noticed it, hit her, took the food from her and handed it to my mother and me.

Next I remember that they herded us into a barrack. There were no bunks there and we were so many that we just had to sit on the floor with each woman sitting between the legs of the woman behind in long rows from wall to wall. I was so exhausted that I slept anyway, but Mother told me that she had to protect my head because people were walking all over me.

We went through another selection and had to parade in the nude before an SS doctor. Mother had a sprained ankle. Someone told her to throw away the bandage, because one should not show any sign of any illness or injury. She did, and although the ankle was still swollen, she passed without any problems. On the other hand I, who was young and healthy was subjected to extensive scrutiny, because I had flea bites on my stomach. It took quite a time during which my mother was dying of fright. But eventually I passed, too.

Kurzbach

Mother and I were lucky because we spent only about four days in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Very soon we were transported to a small camp, Kurzbach, in today's Poland (according to my Polish friend it is now called Zmigród), located about 40 km north of Breslau, now Wrocław, in the center of Lower Silesia.

Kurzbach was a small women's camp with only one thousand women, about half of them Czech, half of them Hungarian and just a few Dutch and Polish. (You could easily tell the Hungarians from the Czechs. Since the Hungarians had been in camp longer than we, their hair was already significantly longer, perhaps three to four centimeters while ours was just a few millimeters long.) We were housed in some stable or barn, but we had bunk beds with straw mattresses. In the morning we got some black water - "ersatz" (substitute) coffee - and in the evening watery soup and a little piece of bread. We all suffered from diarrhea - the latrines were something I would not like to describe. We were divided into ten groups of one hundred women each, given pickaxes and shovels and then sent out to dig antitank trenches against the advancing Russian army. We arrived in Kurzbach at the end of October and it was rapidly getting cold. In the frozen ground, digging was hard work particularly for my mother; I was glad that I could carry her shovel (in addition to mine). In a concentration camp being 45 was very old and people of that age had little chance of survival.

There were several people in the camp I knew from Theresienstadt: my very good friend Eva Sternschuss, her aunt, Lisa Klein, the sister of the well known musician Gideon Klein, and two cousins of Honza, Hana and Eva Ehrlich.

The commandant of the camp, probably a retired army officer, was for me - at seventeen - quite an old man. He was not too bad a person, never hit anybody, never ordered any beating in the camp. At one time a pregnant woman in the camp had a miscarriage and one of the prisoners, who was a physician, helped her and buried the fetus, because being pregnant was sufficient reason to be sent to the gas chambers. Unfortunately, the commandant's dogs dug out the fetus, but neither the woman nor the doctor were punished. (The commandant actually liked and respected the physician, who was quite an attractive woman.) The other guards were also elderly; only two of them were a bit younger, perhaps in their forties. Two of the guards always accompanied and guarded each group of hundred women.

The commandant was a bit crazy. We were divided into groups of one hundred women, called "Hundertschaft." The commandant selected one special "Hundertschaft" of the most attractive women (I was not among them) and they would always lead the procession and had to sing a specially composed song:

Von vielen hundred Frauen
da waren wir erwählt,
das Zeichen von Vertauen
und dass man mit uns zählt.
Ein jeder hat, wie ein Soldat
zu marschieren und exerzieren
und Ordnung halten beim Appell
Wir sind jung and lernen alles schnell.

Wir sind die beste Hundertschaft
bei uns klappt alles fabelhaft
wen wir zu Schantzen gehen.

From many hundred women
we have been selected,
this is a sign of confidence
and that we are being relied on.
Each of us must like a soldier
march and exercise
and keep order at the roll call
We are young and learn everything fast.

We are the best Hundertschaft
with us everything works perfectly
when we go to dig the trenches.

Most of the guards were males, but we had two German female guards. One of them was quite decent, but the other was mean. One time she hit a woman next to me for no reason; I gave her a look which clearly expressed what I thought of her. She noticed it and slapped me in the face, but I must say that I was actually pleased and rather proud that she got the message. I always felt superior to our jailers and

that feeling of superiority sustained me. I was always convinced that I would survive the war.

One day, I think it was in November, with snow already on the ground, we were standing on "Appell," the endless roll calls during which we had to stand in formations outdoors regardless of the often freezing weather and during which we were counted and recounted until the numbers agreed. Suddenly they asked whether there were any gardeners among us. I always loved gardening and so, without thinking, stepped out. I clearly was not using my brains: it was the middle of winter and everything was frozen, there was no way one could plant anything, but I just reacted impulsively, when I heard the word gardening. Two other women, also from Prague, stepped out as well.

It turned out that a woman in the sick bay had died and we, rather then gardeners, were to become grave diggers. A gentile Pole came with an ox driven cart and a wooden coffin with handles and we were ordered to place the dead body in the coffin. We, the three "gardeners", the guard and the coffin were then taken by the cart to a place in the nearby woods. There we were ordered to dig a grave and then dump the corpse into the grave and bring the coffin back. I did not mind the digging, but I was petrified and absolutely unable to touch the dead body. Fortunately, the two other girls, who came from an orphanage (the older of them had been a teacher there) did not grow up in an environment as sheltered as mine and were willing to handle the corpse without me. I must say that they were very good to me and did not ridicule or resent me for my inability to touch the corpse. I was so shaken up by that experience that, when I came back to the camp, I was quite hysterical and kept crying. The Jewish "Lagerälteste" (camp elder, sort of the Jewish head of the camp responsible to the Germans for order in the camp) came to comfort me and kept telling me that burying the dead is a good deed, pronounced a blessing and told me that I would be rewarded for it. She was one of the Hungarian prisoners. Actually, I don't remember any of this - I somehow suppressed the memory of my first contact with a dead human being - but that is what my mother told me.

There were many more deaths and burials, perhaps around 40, and after a while I got used to it; it became just a job. On the way to and from the burial ground I chatted with the other "gardeners" and started entertaining them by reciting poetry, some of which I had read with Honza in Theresienstadt, but also long passages from Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream," which I had learned by heart when I was supposed to play the role of Titania in Prague.

It was rumored that the guard, who usually accompanied us on our trips to the burial site, was from the "Sudeten", the mostly German speaking border region of former Czechoslovakia, and that he actually had a Czech name, Suchy; I have no way of finding out whether this was true, but I shall refer to him as Mr. Suchy anyway. I think he must have been a noncommissioned officer because he was clearly in charge of some of the other guards. He probably did understand some Czech, because he seemed to be listening to my recitations and once asked me: "Was haben Sie studiert?" (What have you studied?). For a German guard it was most unusual and against the rules to use the polite form "Sie" rather than "Du." I answered that I was just a high school kid and then he asked about the profession of my father. I replied that he was a lawyer and that was the end of the exchange - the guards were not allowed to talk to prisoners except to give orders. But somehow Mr. Suchy (if this was really his name) noticed me and took some interest in me which later saved my life. I think that it was also through him that I was able to get my mother a much better and less strenuous job - namely splitting wood for the kitchen and washing kitchen pots and the Germans' plates. This freed her from the truly exhausting work of digging trenches in the frozen ground and moreover gave her the chance to occasionally scrape a little bit of leftover food from the pots and plates.

Evacuation

Sometime, I think it was in the middle of January, we started hearing artillery getting closer. I remember a little episode when we were being passed by a group of French prisoners of war just as we heard a big explosion. A young Frenchman put his hand to his ear and said like in apology: "Oh, pardon!" It was funny and cheered us up.

One day we were told that the camp would have to be evacuated and we were to march towards some destination unknown to us. The commandant even ordered the distribution of whatever additional clothing he had in the store - there was not much of it, but at least he tried. As we were all standing at roll call suddenly there was a call for the "gardeners." This time I did not move. Mother kept urging me to step forward, she was sure that I would be found out and severely punished if I did not. I told her, that as they were liquidating the camp, I was sure that they would have us dig a mass grave, shoot all the people from the sick bay (there were about 50 of them) and then shoot us and put us on top, but finally I gave in to Mother's urging - I have always been a very obedient child. So we, our usual group of "gardeners" with

about ten additional women ordered to help us, went to dig - while the rest of the camp prisoners were being marched off.

I was right. We were ordered to dig a large grave. We were all crying while we were digging, because we were sure that they would kill us all once we finished our work. We actually saw the procession of sick people from the sick bay being guided to the grave. Then suddenly Mr. Suchy came on a bicycle and told our guard: "That is enough; take the women and catch up with the main group." Later, after the war, I learned that Mr. Suchy also sent the sick people back to the sick bay and that they were left for the Russians to liberate.

It was dark by the time we caught up with the main group - they were already in some barn. When I came to the ladder to climb up to the loft, Mr. Suchy was standing there with a flashlight in his hand and shone it into my face. When he saw and recognized me he said "Also da sind Sie!" (So here you are!). He was obviously waiting for me. He had earlier promised my mother, who by then realized the danger I was in, that I would be all right.

I remember almost nothing of our evacuation trip. We were always sleeping in some barn belonging to a deserted farm house. When, in 1964, I visited Ruth Hirsch Weir in Palo Alto (then Associate Professor of Linguistics at Stanford University, originally Ruth Hirsch from Brno), she thanked me for pulling her on a sled, which her mother somewhere requisitioned, during our evacuation march when she was totally exhausted and unable to walk. I have absolutely no recollection of it, but she assured me that it was definitely me who was pulling her along.

Escape

One morning, after we spent another night in some barn in a farm house, my mother walked through the yard looking for a place where she could relieve herself. Mr. Suchy saw her, went straight to her and asked: "What are you going to do?" A surprising and strange question indeed - as if we had any choices! My mother answered: "What can I do?" She could hardly believe her ears when he told her: "Do not go to Gross-Rosen. Do not go to Gross-Rosen. Think of your daughter!" And then he started yelling: "Scram, I don't have any bread." Of course, we did not have the slightest idea that we were being led to Gross-Rosen and besides we had no idea what Gross-Rosen was. Only much later, after the war, did we learn that it was a horrible camp infested with typhus where people died by the thousands and from

which people were driven on further death marches under horrible conditions to other camps as the Russian front was approaching. Kurzbach (or Kurzbach-Gruenthal) was one of the 97 sub-camps of Gross-Rosen (cf. Wikipedia). (See the Appendix for Renata Kraus' recollections.)

Mother was quite bewildered. She returned to our group and said: "Girls, Suchy told me to run away." She spread the information around and quickly found three women who decided to join us. A while later, when we were lining up to continue our march in a long column five wide, our row of five slipped across the road into the deep forest just on the other side of the road. The column closed behind us and after a while left without any of the guards noticing that we were missing.

It was January, the snow was knee deep and we were very poorly dressed and had only wooden shoes. We were, half naked and freezing, but waited until it got dark. Only then did we venture out of the woods back onto the road and actually continued in the same direction as our column had gone. After a while we came to a village, which seemed deserted. We tried one of the houses - it was not locked and we went in. Mother, who up to this time was rather passive and dependent on me, now took command of our group. She found a piece of pork frozen to the top of a dog house. She tore it off with part of the wood and brought it to the kitchen. In the meantime the other women started a fire and using snow from the ground - there was no other source of water - mother began boiling the meat.

We had not been in "our" house very long when someone knocked on the door and a German woman with six children asked whether she could join us. She was a rural woman who was running before the approaching Soviet army. We told her that we were Czech workers and that we too were trying to escape the Russians. She did not really care and did not seem to notice either our strange appearance - shaved heads, by now covered with hair less than an inch long - or our "outfits" with the red stripes down our backs. Or maybe we had already discarded the incriminating coats, I don't remember. In any case the woman was interested only in feeding and protecting her children. Mother sent me to a little room behind the kitchen, because she thought that I looked too Jewish - the other four women did not - and that it was safer if I was not seen. For me it was like a theater: I was just sitting there and observing what was happening.

A bit later there was someone else banging on the door and in walked a German soldier, I think he was what was called a Waffen-SS (this was the SS who fought at

the front rather than serving in concentration camps), with a submachine gun. His hand was in a sling. He told the women that he had been wounded not far from there by a Russian tank. The German woman started fussing about him and feeding him our precious pork and so the other women had to pretend solicitude too. I remained hidden in the little room behind the kitchen. Finally the officer was ready to leave. He told us that we could stay overnight, but that we should leave in the morning because the Russians could be there very soon. As he was leaving, he stood up in the doorway, raised his hand to a Nazi salute and said loudly: "Heil Hitler. Und doch werden wir siegen!" (And yet we shall win!)

After this incident we realized that it was the smoke coming from the chimney, advertising our house as inhabited, which was attracting attention in the otherwise deserted village. So we extinguished the fire and then spent a night without further visitors. In the morning the German woman with her children was ready to leave and urged us to join her. Blaming it on my mother's age (at the age of 45 she did indeed look quite old; her hair was all gray) we said that we would rest a little longer and then follow her.

Liberation

We spent several days in our new home, mostly looking for food. There was not much left, but I did discover a big pot of molasses. Mother warned me not to eat it, but I was too hungry and starved for something sweet; so I consumed a totally unreasonable amount of them. Fortunately I only paid for my foolishness and disobedience with a severe bout of diarrhea. It could have been much worse - many people liberated from concentration camps died after eating too much regular food following months of starvation. Fortunately, since our situation in Theresienstadt had not been that bad and we had been in Auschwitz and Kurzbach only a little over three months, our organs were still able to cope with normal food.

After a few days my mother went to the outhouse and came back excited: "Girls, I saw some soldiers in strange uniforms with stars on their hats. I think they are Russians." No sooner did she finish when the door burst open and soldiers with submachine guns trained on us burst in. We started yelling in Czech (we did not know Russian, but Czech, also being a Slavic language, is similar enough that we hoped they would understand): "Don't shoot, don't shoot, we are Czechs!" A while later they were joined by a young officer who kept looking at us searchingly and then walked straight up to me and asked: "Yevreika?" I did not know any Russian,

but "Yevrei" sounded very much like "hebrew." I understood that he was asking me whether I was Jewish. I nodded hesitantly - until now admitting that one was Jewish was not exactly recommended. The Russian was delighted. It turned out that he, too, was Jewish and that we were the first living Jews he had seen in the conquered territory. He took my mother to a pigsty and shot a pig and donated it to us. He also told us that they were the elite troops, but warned us that the troops following them were dangerously undisciplined.

I can't quite remember the details, but after a few days we acquired a cart and an ox. Mother found two nice Polish boys who knew how to handle the ox and we started out in the eastern direction. (We believed that the boys were actually "Volks-deutche", Poles who claimed to be German and who served in the German army, but who, at the last moment, discarded their uniforms and tried to mingle with the rest of the population.) The ground was covered in snow and I noticed that the Russian soldiers had white sheets so I kept telling Mother and the others that we should also get some white sheets, to make us less visible, but was told to shut up. A few minutes later a low flying German plane spotted our cart and attacked us with its machine gun and then threw a small bomb. Fortunately, our ox was a lot smarter than we were: he made a sharp turn and dumped us all in a ditch thus saving our lives. Mother groaned that she had been shot in the back, but it turned out that she was only hit by a piece of flying gravel propelled by either the bomb or a machine gun bullet. After this incident we did acquire white sheets and used them. (Getting stuff like that was not difficult - there were many deserted houses and the Germans running away from the Russians could not take everything with them. After what they had taken from us, we had no compunctions about helping ourselves to what we needed.) We traveled from village to village and spent the nights in deserted farm-houses.

There were no problems with the first Russian soldiers, presumably an elite group. However, things changed with the next group. I have a clear recollection of one night when I was lying in bed with Mother and a young soldier burst in and ordered my mother to get out of the bed so that he could lie with me, and threatening her with his gun. Mother refused and kept berating him. He was repeating: "Go mother, or I will shoot you." Mother kept responding; "Shoot me, shoot me!" Of course he spoke Russian and my mother responded in Czech, but they did understand each other. For some reason, I was not really scared - I had immense confidence in my mother's ability to protect me and found the entire situation actually amusing - I was that silly. Finally my mother yelled at the soldier: "For three years

we have been prisoners of the Germans and they never touched us. You say you came to liberate us and look how you behave!" He asked incredulously "They never touched you?" "No" shouted mother. That must have made an impression on him. He lay down on the floor next to our bed and fell asleep. When I woke up the next morning, he was gone. Mother, of course, did not sleep all night.

At another time, drunken Russian soldiers came to the room we occupied. I just happened to be outside at the water well. Mother ran after me and ordered me to go to the neighboring house which was occupied by a large family of Yugoslavs - the Germans took entire villages for forced labor - which was also trying to find its way back home. Their family name was Merslavic. Mother ordered me not to leave the Yugoslavs regardless of what I heard. All I could hear were loud voices, first singing which after a while turned into shouting and then some gunfire. I was petrified, but being an excessively obedient child I just stayed with the Yugoslavs and waited through the whole night. What happened was that the three women who escaped with us were quite friendly with the soldiers and chatted and drank with them, but that the soldiers demanded more. When the women refused, they raped them while one of the soldiers kept pointing a gun at my mother. Mother at the age of 45, all gray and wrinkled, looked very old indeed and so, fortunately, the soldiers did not seem interested in her. Besides, she refused to drink with them and just kept plucking a chicken and cooking and berating the soldiers. They were threatening her with a submachine gun, but did not touch her, only kept ordering her to keep quiet. The three women later asked the Russian commandant for protection.

As much as one would have liked to be friendly with our liberators, it was too dangerous - they were not used to stopping at friendly conversations. I was once stopped by a soldier in the yard with the question: "Where are you going, little girl?" I answered "If you really want to know, I am going to the outhouse." And that was that. He just stood there baffled and left me alone.

For some women from our concentration camp things ended a lot worse. One day we discovered the dead bodies of two women from our camp - they were Dutch and the Russians probably took them for Germans, raped and killed them.

After this experience Mother asked the Yugoslavs, whether we could move in with them. They were very nice and agreed and after that we had no more problems. Mr. Merslavic, the head of the extended family of about 18 members, from babies to grandparents, was very good at dealing with the Russians. At first he told them that

he had a brother fighting the Germans in Marshall Tito's partisan army. Since that made a good impression, the number of his brothers fighting with Tito increased to three. He became the spokesman for our entire group including Mother, referred to as "pani Ceska" and me, "gospodienka Evicka." We sort of became part of the family to the extent that when one young woman in the family died, it was my mother who washed the body and prepared it for burial.

We settled temporarily in some village and the Russians employed us. The Yugoslav (Slovenian) men were carpenters and therefore useful to the Russians. We were mostly loading everything the Russians could find onto railroad cars to be taken to the Soviet Union. For that work we were given shelter and food. I have one memory: when I was loading very heavy sacks (about 175 lb) of flour, some boys were making fun of me for needing help putting the sacks on my back. That annoyed me and to show them, I did manage to lift a sack by myself. Another memory is that once when I lifted a sack, I uncovered a nest of mice and the baby mice somehow climbed up over my back up to my neck. I stood frozen until someone helped me to get rid of them.

Mother did not have to work, but did a lot of cooking for all of us. We were invited to a May 1st celebration and there we learned that large parts of Czechoslovakia had already been liberated and so Mother told Mr. Merslavic that it would be good if we all went to liberated Czechoslovakia and he agreed. He succeeded in persuading the Russians to give us a railroad car and let us move towards the Czechoslovak border. We ended up in Czenstochova, still all living in that railroad car, when on May 8th we were woken up by a tremendous amount of gunfire. At first we did not know what was going on but then we learned that the Russians were celebrating the end of the war.

There was one incident which spoiled the otherwise wonderful pleasure of being free and having survived, and Germany having been defeated. Mr. Merslavic was talking with a group of Poles outside our car. One of them said: "What the Germans did was horrible. The only good thing they did was to rid us of all the Jews." How a member of a nation which had suffered so much at the hands of the Nazis could say that is something I could not understand and can never forget.

We then managed to get our railroad car attached to another train which took us to Katovice, where there were large collection centers for all kinds of displaced persons.

Return to Prague

A Czech, who was somehow in charge of a camp for displaced persons advised us: "Don't wait for the Russians to repatriate you - they have a very broad concept of a country and may well take you somewhere to eastern Slovakia by God knows by what route. Try to make it on your own!" We followed his advice and parted with the very nice Yugoslavs. We started on foot, crossed into Moravska Ostrava, and then continued on foot, hitchhiking on trucks, and eventually by train; finally we managed to get to Prague.

When we arrived in Prague, we made it to the apartment house where Mother's best friend, my "aunt" Jindra Schierova, lived. It was early in the morning, about four or five o'clock, and the house was locked. We stood in the street and shouted "Jindro, Jindro!" and she eventually opened the window and waved inviting us in. She came down, opened the house, and we stayed with her until we found an apartment. Jindra was wonderful, she returned to us not only all the things she kept for us but even those from the Werner family from which nobody survived. Aunt Anna, my father's younger sister, had been married to Vilem Werner, a jeweler, and he gave Jindra several pieces of jewelry for safekeeping. Mother and Jindra stayed friends until her death - she visited Mother twice for several months in America.

I was most concerned with what happened to Honza. Before we parted, we exchanged the addresses of our gentile contacts in Prague. I gave him the address of Aunt Jindra and he gave me the address of his father's secretary, Jindriska Seidnerova. In addition we agreed to send letters addressed to "general delivery" at the main post office in Prague. It may sound ridiculous, but I was far too shy to go to Mrs. Seidnerova and ask her whether she had heard from anybody from the Robitschek family. So every day I went to the post office looking for a message from Jan, but in vain. I also used to go to the former Jewish town hall, which became a sort of meeting place for young people who had returned from the camps and where we exchanged news about friends and relatives.

I remember that it was the day of my 18th birthday, May 29, 1945, three weeks after the end of the war, when I came to the Jewish Town Hall after another futile visit to the post office, and my friends asked me whether I had heard from Honza. I responded sadly: "No, I believe that he must be dead, otherwise I would have heard from him by now." At the time we still lived with Jindra. When I came home that

day she waved at me excitedly with a letter in her hand - it was from Honza, from a hospital in Zatec, about 45 miles west of Prague.

I immediately said that I was going to visit him and Mother had no objections; Aunt Jindra was a bit shocked that Mother would let a young girl visit a man on her own. When I found Honza in the hospital, he was so weak that he could not even leave the bed. I think that he was glad to see me, but that he was still very much in shock after learning that neither his parents nor his sister had survived. From then on we exchanged frequent letters, but Honza's "love letters" consisted mostly of reports how his diarrhea was improving. He returned to Prague only after four months, in September, and from then on we saw each other regularly.

Mother started searching for an apartment. That meant going to the Housing Office (bytovy urad) and waiting endlessly. I think that it was at that time that Mother decided to change our name from Porgesova, a very typical Jewish name, to the Czech sounding Trojanova. She claimed that with the Czech name she got much faster service. Eventually, she got a voucher for a three-bedroom apartment in the center of Prague, at Krakovska 10, where we then lived until our escape from Czechoslovakia in 1960. My mother made no attempt to regain our prewar apartment (in Trojanova street - that is where our new name came from) and never even visited it, although it could have still contained some of our property - she simply could not face visiting the place full of memories of Father.

I was eager to go back to school and to live a normal life. I had no difficulties being accepted. Everybody from the director to the classmates was very nice to me with one exception. When I first came to class still in May 1945 I probably looked pretty awful - I still had very short hair after it has been shaved only half a year before. I did not have any shoes, just some old sneakers into which someone had cut holes on the top. When I entered the classroom one boy said out loudly: "What does this Polish Jewess want here?" There was a stunned silence and then everybody started talking as if nothing had happened. I never spoke to that boy again until we met at the 55th class reunion in 2002. He saw me and greeted me cordially. For a moment I hesitated, unsure whether I should talk to him or say something about what he said on my first day of school, but then I decided that it would only spoil the mood for everybody and so I responded in a friendly tone. The next time we met he had had a stroke and could barely speak; he came and sat next to me and told me "You are all right by me;" I assume it was his way of apologizing. The following year the class, including me, went to his memorial service.

The school not only waived my tuition, but even awarded me a stipend. As the religion teacher, a catholic priest, was the one who was in charge of student welfare, he would call me out of class to hand me the stipend. One of the protestant teachers used to kid me: "Is he trying to convert you?" But it was the girls in my class who made my return to a normal life not only possible, but easy. They received me in friendship and helped me to catch up with all I had missed. I was banned from the school in 1940, after finishing only the second year of the eight year program (corresponding to the seventh grade of an American school) and now, when I was readmitted I was placed in the sixth (11th) grade at the very end of the school year, with only about one month left before the start of the summer vacations. So there was a five-year gap only partially attenuated by a bit less than two years of home schooling between 1940 and 1942.

I don't think I ever worked as hard as when I was trying to catch up with the high school material. My classmates were very helpful. One of them, Helena Pilairova, helped me with Latin and Greek (I was in a "classical gymnasium" where Latin was taught from the 3rd (8th) and classical Greek from the 5th (10th) grade.). We became good friends until one fateful evening in February 1948 when she and her husband Jan Cap were at our home just at the time of the Communist putsch, which Jan and I decried and they vehemently defended. During the heated discussion Cap called Jan an "over-critical, over-individualistic utopian socialist." Both Helena and her husband remained Communists and I was told she later worked as a psychologist in a prison. We never talked again until just a few years ago at one of the class reunions and we never discussed her political views or her life during the Communist regime.

Another person who was incredibly helpful to me was the best student in the class, Milada Wünschova, who helped me with all kinds of subjects and did not mind that I would sort of become her rival for the position of number one student in the class. I remember fondly the hours we spent sitting together in the little park on the Zofin island (in the Vltava river) solving mathematical problems. We remain lifelong friends and she visited us twice in the States.

As soon as Jan returned to Prague we resumed dating. We would go for long walks, go to the movies or to the theater, and he would very frequently have dinner at our house. I also was a frequent guest at the Reisers, where Jan lived during his first year back in Prague, and I attended some mathematical lectures Arnost Reiser

gave to a small group of interested younger people. Milena Pollertova, Jan's classmate and friend from his days of the chemical course offered by the Jewish community after Jews were barred from public schools, was also there. Jan used to study with her both during the war, before Theresienstadt, and again after the war when they both were enrolled at the Technical University. One evening, when Jan was walking me home after one of the sessions with Arnost Reiser, I was very depressed and finally burst out bitterly crying. Jan could not understand what was going on until I told him that if he liked Milena Pollertova, he was free to do so and that we could break up. It took him quite some time and effort to reassure me that she was only a colleague, with whom he liked to study, but that he had no interest in her as a woman. Although he was not interested in her and she not in him, the same was obviously not true of her mother, who once said to my aunt Ruzena (who lived in the same neighborhood as the Pollerts) "I don't understand why Jan wants to marry Eva: she is neither pretty nor does she have any money" to which my aunt answered not too cleverly: "But she is intelligent."

I spent the first summer after my return from the camp in a very elegant environment. A prominent Czech humanist, Premysl Pitr, organized a summer recreation camp for children who returned from the camps in chateaus which used to belong to some nobility in the villages of Kamenice, Olesovice and Stirin. Mother worked there in some sort of supervisory capacity in the kitchen of the Kamenice chateau, where I stayed too. I was too old to be one of the children and too young to be one of the supervisors, so my status was something in-between and I was basically free to do whatever I wanted. I spent the time gardening and felt a bit like the lady of the manor. I rested in the beautiful parks, studied and wrote letters to Honza. I also helped care for the younger children. One of them was the six-year old Eva Treulich, the daughter of Jan's cousin. Very atypically for children who just returned from the camps, she ate very slowly. I was losing patience and told her "Tak už honeněte jez" (Now quickly eat), whereupon the little squirt answered in English: "You are a silly ass" which rhymed perfectly with the Czech sentence. I keep reminding her of that whenever we meet.

The next summer, in 1946, Mother borrowed a summer cottage at the edge of the woods near the small town of Zebrak from some friend of Mr. Stepanek, who had been married to Mother's half-sister Ida (who died many years ago). We spent almost the entire summer there with Honza, of course under the watchful supervision of Mother. Honza slept in the main room, a sort of living and dining room, while Mother and I slept in a small bedroom. As the cottage was quite far from any other

inhabited place, Jan thought that he should be armed and slept with an ax under his bed - God only knows what he would have done with it if an intruder had appeared. Fortunately, the only intruder was a dog who one night which, when our bitch Bibi was in heat, jumped right onto Honza through the open window above his bed. We spent every morning studying mathematics. Jan borrowed a very good English textbook, I believe it was called "Calculus for Scientists and Engineers," but his English was very poor and so I helped him by translating such difficult terms as "hence," "therefore," "if we substitute" and so on. We essentially went through the entire book together and solved hundreds of problems. In the afternoon we usually went for walks in the woods.

In May 1947 I passed my "maturity examination" and graduated from the gymnasium with straight A's in spite of all the lost years. Many years later, at a class reunion, I reproached our physical education teacher for grading me unfairly. At first she was taken aback. I said "You gave me an A even though I was probably the clumsiest girl in the class and could never climb a rope." Her response was: "I graded by effort."

About a month later, on June 26, Jan and I were married in a civil ceremony. Because the traditional place for civil weddings, the Old Town Hall, had been seriously damaged during the Prague uprising in the last days of the war, the ceremony took place in the 18th century Glam-Gallas Palace in Husova Str. in Prague's Old Town. (Many years later, during one of our visits to Prague, our older son Martin was taking a sort of memorial picture of us standing in front of the palace and kissing. Some tourists noticed it and assuming that it was some special local custom, started lining up in front of the palace kissing and taking pictures.) The wedding was followed by a lunch at our home. The guests were our witnesses, Dr. Adolf Kocna, a lawyer (lawyers in Czechoslovakia were awarded a JUDr. degree (doctor of law) and used the Dr. title) and very close friend of my parents, particularly of my father, and Jan's 70-year old uncle, Oto Robicek, with whom Jan lived up to the date of the wedding. Also present were uncle Oto's 80-year old mother-in-law, Matilda Fiala. "Aunt" Matilda was a widow who lost both of her children and lived with uncle Oto not only in the same apartment, but later was forced to share with him a single room when the Communist authorities decided that a two-room apartment was excessive for two old people and moved another family in. Dr. Kocna's Jewish wife was of course also one of the guests. Because her gentile husband refused to divorce her, she never went to a concentration camp, although he himself was sent to a work camp. (Dr. Kocna was immensely helpful to us; when he first learned of our

return he came and gave Mother a fairly large sum of money and told her to ask for more if she needed it.) At the dinner Dr. Kocna gave a speech on the theme "Mens sana in corpore sano" (a healthy mind in a healthy body); it was meant very well but I don't think that Jan and I found it very inspiring or interesting. The only other guests were my beloved "aunt" Jindra and her son, Zdenek. All the girls of my class, who, of course, were at the wedding ceremony, came for a visit in the afternoon and were served pastries - Czech "kolace." Because of the belief that the one who got the corner piece would marry next, they wanted to know which ones were the corner pieces, to which my mother responded: "All of them."

After lunch Jan and I went on our honeymoon trip - to a small hotel "Modra hvězda" (Blue Star) in the little village of Olesovice, which I remembered well from the summer of 1945. In the afternoon we went for a walk and then lay down on a patch of grass in the woods. There Honza tried for the first time to unbutton my blouse, but I was still too shy and tried to divert his attention by pointing out the heather nearby. He responded with a somewhat annoyed "OK, OK heather" and that phrase has been used by us many times since - whenever somebody tries to avoid a subject. In the evening we had dinner and then I washed in private in the washbasin in our room (we had no bathroom) and dressed again so that Honza could undress me for our wedding night. To fulfill my father's prophesy, we brought with us and read for a while a book of poetry which Honza had given me earlier for my birthday and which he inscribed with a line from one of my favorite children's poems of the well known Czech poet Frantisek Halas: "...a slza, slza je voda, co je sama." (..and a tear, a tear is water that is alone). I have not been a tear since.

From here on we experienced almost everything together and - except for my professional life - Jan already described our lives in his Memoirs.,

Professional life

I started studying chemistry (had it not been for Jan's influence it is unlikely that I would have selected that field of study) at the Technical University in Prague as Mrs. Rocek (actually Rockova), but many of my colleagues did not know that I was married. This generally did not matter, but once, at a "Chemistry Ball" one of my classmates asked me for a dance and then kept dancing with me, until I - not quite knowing how to end this - asked him "May I introduce you to my husband?" He was obviously very annoyed that he had wasted all that time and effort on a sub par dancer and never spoke to me again during the four years of our studies.

I remember my first exam - it was in mineralogy and we had to identify a large number of minerals. Jan had told me that he did quite well, but had a problem with one mineral which he incorrectly identified as cassiterite (a tin ore), when in fact it was chromite (a chromium ore). When it happened the second time, old Professor Ondrej said "If somebody knew chromite, he would have recognized it." I remembered that story. Having spent countless hours going to the museum and studying rocks, I did very well during my exam, but there was one sample, I could not identify, until Prof. Ondrej started: "If somebody knew..." I immediately interrupted him and said "chromite" and I was right.

My greatest success was in the mathematics course. The professor, Dr. Hampl, liked to call students to the blackboard to demonstrate the solving of problems. At one point he complained that only men were volunteering to come to the blackboard and asked for a woman volunteer. One girl answered the call, but she was totally incompetent and Hampl enjoyed making fun of her and ridiculing her. She did not seem to mind and volunteered again and again. I, on the other hand, got quite annoyed and angry that she was representing the female students and casting them in a ridiculous light. So the next time when Dr. Hampl asked for a female volunteer I got up before the usual victim could. He seemed to be glad to have found another victim, but I disappointed him - I was very well prepared and had no difficulties solving the problems. From then on he used to call on me often and I always did very well. He did not know me by name, I was just "ta slevna" (that Miss). However, when it came to the final written exam, I experienced an inexplicable mental block and messed up the exam completely. The normal routine was that he would review the written exam and call each student to his office to award him the final grade. When he came to my exam, he said that it was a D exam, but then he recognized me and asked "Is this your exam, Miss - what happened?" I said that I did not know, I had a complete panic attack. So he gave me more problems to solve right in front of him in his office. After the first he said "Well, now it would be a C" and tested me patiently going through one problem after another until I finally earned an A.

When I graduated with my Ing. degree (roughly equivalent to a M.S. degree) in 1951, I was assigned to an explosives plant outside of Prague, but because I was married and my husband was a graduate student at the Technical University in Prague at the time, I was allowed to find a job in Prague. I managed to get an interview at VUFB (Vyzkumny ustav pro farmacii a biochemii, Research Institute for Pharmacy and Biochemistry), which had an opening in the organic synthesis group. For

some reason on that day the only applicants who were interviewed were women. The verdict of the group leader for organic synthesis, Dr. Budesinsky, was: "I don't want any woman in the lab, but if I have to have one, then I'll take that Rockova."

However, his decision was not enough: it had to be approved by the political personnel officer, who interviewed me in the presence of the director of the institute. He wanted to know about my political activities - I had none, only the essentially compulsory membership in SCM (Svaz ceskoslovenske mladcze), the state sponsored youth organization. He was not satisfied and pointed out that I had held no leadership position. I felt that my chances of getting the job were already lost anyway, so I did not care anymore and answered: "All the time you read in the newspapers how terrible it is that Jews forced themselves into leading positions everywhere. Here you have one Jewess, who is not in a leadership position and you aren't satisfied either." (This was at the time of the infamous Slansky affair which was accompanied by a full-fledged attack on Jews, particularly on those in leading positions in the Communist party, many of whom were jailed and convicted on trumped up charges. Slansky, the former most powerful man in the Party, its Secretary-General, was executed.) The political officer was taken aback and responded: "We don't need people with a warped characters here," but to my great surprise I got the job.

I think that Dr. Budesinsky was rather fond of me - I was very touched that, in 1990 (after the fall of communist regime in the "Velvet Revolution"), when Jan and I visited the Institute of the Academy where Jan used to work Budesinsky came to see me. He had to get permission to leave the hospital, where he was lying ill with terminal cancer; he died shortly after our meeting.

At first I worked on the synthesis of anti-tuberculosis drugs. As part of this work I tried to follow the work published by an American author in the most prominent American chemical journal, the Journal of the American Chemical Society, and could not reproduce the work. Everybody must have been convinced that it was just the incompetence of a beginning chemist, but finally I was able to prove that the work was wrong, and that what the author considered a single compound was in fact a mixture of two isomers (compounds of the same composition but with different structures). I submitted the work as my doctoral thesis and was awarded the degree of Doctor of Technical Sciences (equivalent to a Ph.D. degree). Since doctoral degrees in chemistry were not very common, they were still awarded individually in a fairly elaborate ceremony. A senior faculty member serving as the "Promoter" formally recommended me to the Dean for the degree and the Rector and then

awarded it. I had to give the obligatory speech thanking the working class for supporting my studies.

Later I had been transferred to another group, led by Dr. Semonsky, where I worked on the synthesis of anticancer drugs, among them nitrogen mustards, compounds analogous to the mustard gas used during W.W.I. One day I awoke at night with a blister on my finger - my rubber glove must have had a tear and I had a mustard gas burn. I got quite upset and called my boss in the middle of the night, waking up his mother-in-law, who was not too pleased. He recommended that I go to the military hospital, which I did, but they did not know what to do with a mustard gas burn either. Fortunately, the burn was small and healed by itself after some time.

When we arrived in America, I stayed at home for a while, taking care of the children and our new household, but after a few months I got an offer to work for Teddy Traylor, a senior postdoctoral fellow of Professor Paul Bartlett in the Harvard Chemistry Department. We met Teddy because he was the husband of Pat Traylor, a graduate student in Frank Westheimer's group. Teddy was a wonderful person and I was very fond of him. After he left Bartlett's group to accept a faculty position at the then new San Diego campus of the University of California, I inherited his position and became a postdoctoral fellow in Paul Bartlett's group.

When, in 1962, when Jan accepted a faculty position at Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., we moved to a house in Bethesda, Maryland, which belonged to a colleague in Westheimer's group, Karl Schellenberg; he later sold the house to us. The closing of the sale took place in the office of a lawyer and was a bit unusual. Until the last minute we kept arguing about the price - Karl asked for \$20,000 and we thought that that was unreasonably low and wanted him to accept more, but he refused. Then the lawyer informed us that there was a codicil on the house, that "it must not be sold to a Negro, an Armenian, or a Jew," but that, in 1964, it was unenforceable. Karl said: "That of course does not concern you!" to which I replied: "It does." Karl: "You are not Armenian?" Me: "No, but we are Jewish." At this point Karl, with whom we had spent two years at Harvard wanted us to tell him right there, in the lawyer's office, how we survived the war. I think that the lawyer found it a quite unique house sale experience and so did our good friend, John Krasny, an Austrian of Czech descent, who asked us to make sure to invite him the next time we were going to buy a house.

I found a job at a little company with a somewhat strange name "Resources Research, Inc.," and was supposed to perfect a method for detecting life on Mars. The method was based on the assumption, that living organisms must contain ATP (adenosine triphosphate), which could be detected, because it is an inevitable component of the reaction between luciferin and luciferase. It is this reaction which is responsible for the light flashes produced by fireflies. I was able to reproduce the synthesis of luciferin, but my principal contribution to the project was a negative one, but one which saved the company some serious embarrassment. My predecessor on the project had achieved a very high sensitivity for the reaction - he could get the luciferin-luciferase mixture to generate (on an oscilloscope) very visible signals even with the tiniest amounts of ATP. However, to my amazement I found that he never bothered to carry out a blind experiment, i.e., one in the absence of any ATP. When I carried it out as one of my first experiments, I got an equally strong signal with no ATP present, just by injecting pure redistilled water. Even though the company paid me well - they spontaneously increased my salary by about 50% after a few months and my salary actually exceeded Jan's - I did not think that this was serious work and suspected that the company exploited the currently easily available government grants. So I quit the job as soon as Jan accepted his offer from the University of Illinois.

In Wilmette, Illinois, I stayed home for the first time in my life - for about two years. The children enjoyed it a lot and volunteered me for every possible job at school. Then one day I heard Jan on the phone saying: "No, I don't think, that she would be interested, but you can ask her." It was one of Jan's colleagues, Professor Robert Walter, who had just been hired as Director of Freshmen Chemistry, looking for an assistant. Jan was wrong: I was interested and accepted the job.

Walter was not very well organized; he had difficulties delegating work and I did not have much to do. On the other hand, he was very often away from his office and so when his freshmen students came with questions, I started helping the students and working with them. Obviously I must have done quite well, because more and more students were coming to seek my help.

The following year Walter was replaced by another faculty member, C. F. Liu, as Director of the Freshmen Chemistry program and Liu brought with him his own assistant. Bill Sager, the Head of the Department, asked me if I could help the department, which at that time had a large freshmen class, but very few graduate students and therefore not enough people to assist lecturers handling classes of two- to three

hundred students, by becoming a Teaching Assistant. My response was that I could not, because I had never done any teaching, to which Sager replied: "And what do you think you have been doing here all this time with all those students? We have been watching you." So I started teaching as a T.A. but not for very long. One day I was at home and got a call from C.F. Liu asking me to take over the entire course including the lectures. I was very reluctant, but finally he persuaded me and I started lecturing. I don't think I ever worked as hard as when I was preparing my lectures. It took me 10 to 15 hours to prepare a 50 minutes lecture. I had to go back and re-study things I had long forgotten, but the class was a success. And from then on I taught freshman chemistry to many thousands of students, sometimes smaller classes for honor students, sometimes huge classes of 300 or even more students, until my retirement in 1994. I was a popular teacher. In spite of the fact that I was a very strict grader and flunked many, the students nominated me for a teaching award almost every year and I actually won the Silver Circle Award for Excellence in Teaching twice. I loved teaching and the contact with the students, a few of whom still write to me.

APPENDIX

Renata Kraus (later Seligman) was with me in Kurzbach, but unlike Mother and I did not manage to escape from the Evacuation march. Here is (in Jan's translation from the German original) her vivid description of her horrendous experiences and suffering during last months of the war, particularly after the time of our escape. Her description gives full insight of the fate which Mother and I escaped thanks for Mr. Suchy's warning.

(I wish to thank Mordechai Livni for sending us Renata's account and to her sons, Michael and Ralph Seligman for permission of appending it to my memoirs.)

And we are in a train again. We are going and we don't know where. Allegedly for work.

One thousand women get of the train. One thousand women march one kilometer after another until they finally stop at a barn. The next day we go to work. The work is hard; the winter is cold. We are half-naked and our wage is a quart of soup.

Snowed covered fields, snow covered paths. Snow covered fields. We go to work in groups of one hundred. A spade on one's shoulder, we labor day in and day out. The screaming and cursing of the Schupos accompanies us: "Will you hurry up, you dung heap vermin, you barn owls, you whore's daughters, you stinking Jews".

The snow is frozen and we are being driven to walk faster. One after the other falls down. "Up! What, you don't want to go on?; Up;; Quick;; Run;; Tempo - Down! air raid cover; What? You don't want to practice air raid cover? Up; - Down; - Up; Down; Won't you do it, you dung heap vermin!"

Three month have passed. In the distance we can hear the thunder of cannons and shooting. These are our most beautiful symphonies and the only thing which keeps us up. Perhaps we shall be liberated soon? Is it possible that peace could come?

One day we want to get ready for work as usually. The camp commander yells at us: "Stay inside. Whoever goes out will be shot."

Our symphony are coming closer and closer. We are getting restless. Why aren't they sending us out to work?

"Counting roll-call, counting roll-call." We fall in to line. Turn left; and now we are marching out of the gate forever. We start singing our camp anthem:

*Oh Kurzbach, I can't forget you
because you are my fate,
only who leaves you, can fathom
how splendid freedom is.*

*Oh Kurzbach we don't lament or moan,
in spite of everything we want to say YES to life,
because the day will come and we will be free.*

And we march day and night and day and night. "Faster, faster." We want to walk slowly, we want to be liberated. But every time our steps slow down we are again driven forward: Fast, fast.

We sleep sometimes 2-3 hours in an open barn. When we wake up we are snowed in and frozen to the ground. One tears the other up from the frozen ground. We have received nothing to eat for a number of days. But we have to go on, we want to live to see peace....

We walk for nine days. And from the distance we again see barbed wire. The concentration camp Gross-Rosen. What is in store for us there? We hope for a warm soup. - Ten days have past and we are again driven onwards. This time to a train.

They crowd us into open railroad cars. 80 to 100 women each car. Where? Where? When will we ever find rest? We ride for five days and five nights. We are hungry. We are snowed in and wet. Where? Where? The women start to quarrel. There is not even enough space to sit down. One of us becomes deranged and starts choking her friend. An other one is dead and we are going and going and the trip won't come to an end.

At noon on the fourth day the train stops in Weimar. ----- Air raid. The railroad station is being bombed and we are sitting in the train and not allowed to go out. Houses next to the railroad are collapsing. The railroad station is hit and collapses, but our train stays. Several cars were hit, but it is not too bad. Perhaps 20 dead. A stone from a house falls on me. However, I know, I know with certainty, that nothing can happen to me. I know that my Mommy protects me.

We continue. Bergen-Belsen;;;;

What is in store for us there? We are passing a sign. "Prisoner-of-war and exchange camp Bergen-Belsen." We are jubilant. Perhaps we are really to be exchanged? We will certainly meet with people we knew from Theresienstadt. However, we are soon disappointed. We are again led to a shower, our miserable clothes

are taken from us and replaced by even more miserable ones. Then we are driven out into the snow.

I have nothing but a pink organdy dress and a torn up coat. It is the beginning of February and spring will come soon.

Four people on a lice infected straw-mattress. But only those who are lucky, the rest have to lie on the ground. I don't know how I had come to so much luck. Lying down during the day is forbidden. But after all, I am on a straw-mattress.

There are early, daily roll-calls, we stand two to three hours, sometimes four, in the snow and rain. Then we are driven in and the putrid smell of the wet clothes fill the entire room. There we sit the entire day, day in and day out, help each other hunt for lice, and waiting for the soup and for the command: Go to sleep.

In the morning we comment dryly on how many people died at night and how many of our friends are among them. Every day one is surprised that one is still alive.

Cowering in a corner lies Lotte Krohneim. She is 24 years old, almost two head shorter than I am. I am very fond of her. She calls to me softly: "Rena, Rena, today is my turn." "Don't talk like that; don't let yourself go." She is too weak to go to the counting roll-call, and when we return to the barrack, she is dead.

I am lying next to my friend. We are hunting for lice. "If one of us should die, the other has to tell their relatives what has happened." "Don't speak nonsense." "My sister's name is S, and she is from Brünn. Say, I...." She starts to cry. "Rena, there is really no point. Why should we unnecessarily suffer so long, we won't survive anyhow. Today it is the fourth day we did not get any bread and barely any soup. Touch me, see how feverish I am." I, too, have high fever. We all have typhoid fever. Isn't she right? Why go on living? Only to suffer more torture?

I am going to the latrine and as I am returning someone calls at me: "They just carried Liesa away, she cut her artery." Is she right? Is she right?

One after the other dies. Perhaps only 60 women survive of the thousand. But we don't want to live any more. We have had enough of losing our friends daily. Why can't we all perish at once?

A new excitement. What does it mean? What happened? Do they perhaps give out bread or soup? For days we had nothing to eat. What is the meaning of this uproar?

"Kids, a white flag was raised on Block A?" What an impossible rumor, - gossip - Who tells such fairy tales? Latrine reports? But here comes the next one and another one that he has seen the white flag.

But in a while it is all forgotten. After three weeks one grasps the first little piece of bread. Each one twelfth of a loaf. "The end will certainly be here soon"

called someone. "Be quiet, there a German is running away. " "There another one". "There are soldiers there with white armbands." "Perhaps it is really peace?" Peace, peace..... Have we really lived to see it?

"What is driving there?" "A tank." ... An English flag.... no... Russian....American.... Is it not a swastika? No, we are free, we are free... it is the English flag after all....

(Prague 1945-46)

PHOTOGRAPHS



Mother, Father and I



My father Viktor Porges about 1938



Grandmother Eleonore (Lora), my father Viktor, aunt Ruzena,
aunt Anna and grandfather Zibrid Porges



The Münz Brothers company truck, Horazdovice, around 1927
Frantisek Münz in the drivers seat, grandfather Zibrid in the roof,
Father and Mother right off center on the truck



My maternal grandparents:
Johana (Jana) and Julius Bondy



My mother's family in Horovice around 1910

Last row: Milena Bondy(?), Karel Münz

Center row: Jan (uncle Honza), Ida, Ella (m. to Karel Münz), grandmother Jana,
my mother Anna, a maid

Front row: Michal and Antonin Bondy, Jara and Jula Münz



Vienna, Monday May 16, 1938

cartoon: Bondy and his son, the jewish press hyenas, escape to Paris from the homeland Vienna. They took with them large sums of stolen money and want to found a new "newspaper".

Headline: Scandalous affairs of Austrian emigrants in Paris/Several arrests/Jew Bondy founds a newspaper.



Captions:

It is those who have the life and livelihood of thousands of our people in the eastern region on their conscience. For years the clan [mischpöche] has emptied out its sewage in the newspapers of Vienna in the most ugly and infamous way over those who put freedom and prosperity of their people [Volkes] above all. Together with the rulers of Mr. Schuschnigg they called for murder and persecution of National Socialists. It was always ready to cover up all despicable deeds of the system. All judgements and all injustices against the defenseless fighters of the German freedom were too mild for it. One of the most dangerous jewish bandit gangs was sitting in the newspaper of the Telegraph company. Look at those faces. Are they not directly taken from a photo album of gangsters?

"We outwitted the Christians"--apparently is what Ervin Engel, the lyricist of the sports Telegraph is thinking. He is in a good mood and at that time had all the reason to be.

The Jew Karl Franz Bondy. In his worried face, you can recognize the premonition of the end of his gangster deeds. He, who not only owns the Midday Telegraph, the Echo, the Telegraph Night Edition, the Seven Day Journal, the Sports Telegraph, but also the International Wood Market, the Wood Market, the New Viennese Journal, the Food Market, and the Colonial Wares Market, as well as Wine Country, was in the true sense of the word the jewish newspaper dictator of Vienna. His legendary connection to government, in particular to press secretary Ludwig, gave him a privileged position which he exploited in the interest of the international criminal jewry in the most infamous and mean way. He is the main culprit of the immeasurable persecution and defamation campaigns against National Socialists in all those years of imprisonment and detention. His bad conscience drove him to flee in the first moment of the new times. He would have been hard to protect from the justified indignation of the German people [Volkes] in Vienna.

Dr. Gustav Canaval, the representative of Schuschnigg in the Telegraph. He was also appointed his government commissioner. Canaval, who comes from strictly Catholic circles, was a willing tool in the hands of the jew Bondy.

The show horse [Paradegol] of Mr. Bondy. The traitor and emigrant Count Curt Strachwitz, for whom it wasn't too stupid to fawn upon the clan [mischpoche] for years with his inflammatory and shameful babbling against the Führer and the Reich.

The Jew and Free Mason leader Eugen Lenhoff, the foreign minister of Bondy and representative of the Telegraph journals at the League of Nations. As the best friend of Bondy, and in whose gangsterism he avidly participated, fled with him...

The person who enabled the pre-eminence of Jews in the Viennese press, and who against all better insight and against the interests of the people, supported and defended it, the press chief of Schuschnigg, the proxy secretary of the shameful system, Eduard Ludwig, was the true boss of the inciting Telegraph, who even Bondy, with whom he was not only friendly but financially bound, was subservient to. When Bondy sometimes did something that embarrassed the government all too openly, then Ludwig issued a house ban and Bondy was not allowed to come into the Telegraph building for several days. Otherwise he was "one heart and one soul" with his dear friend Bondy.



The author around 1930



With cousins Harry Pisinger and Eda Werner about 1932



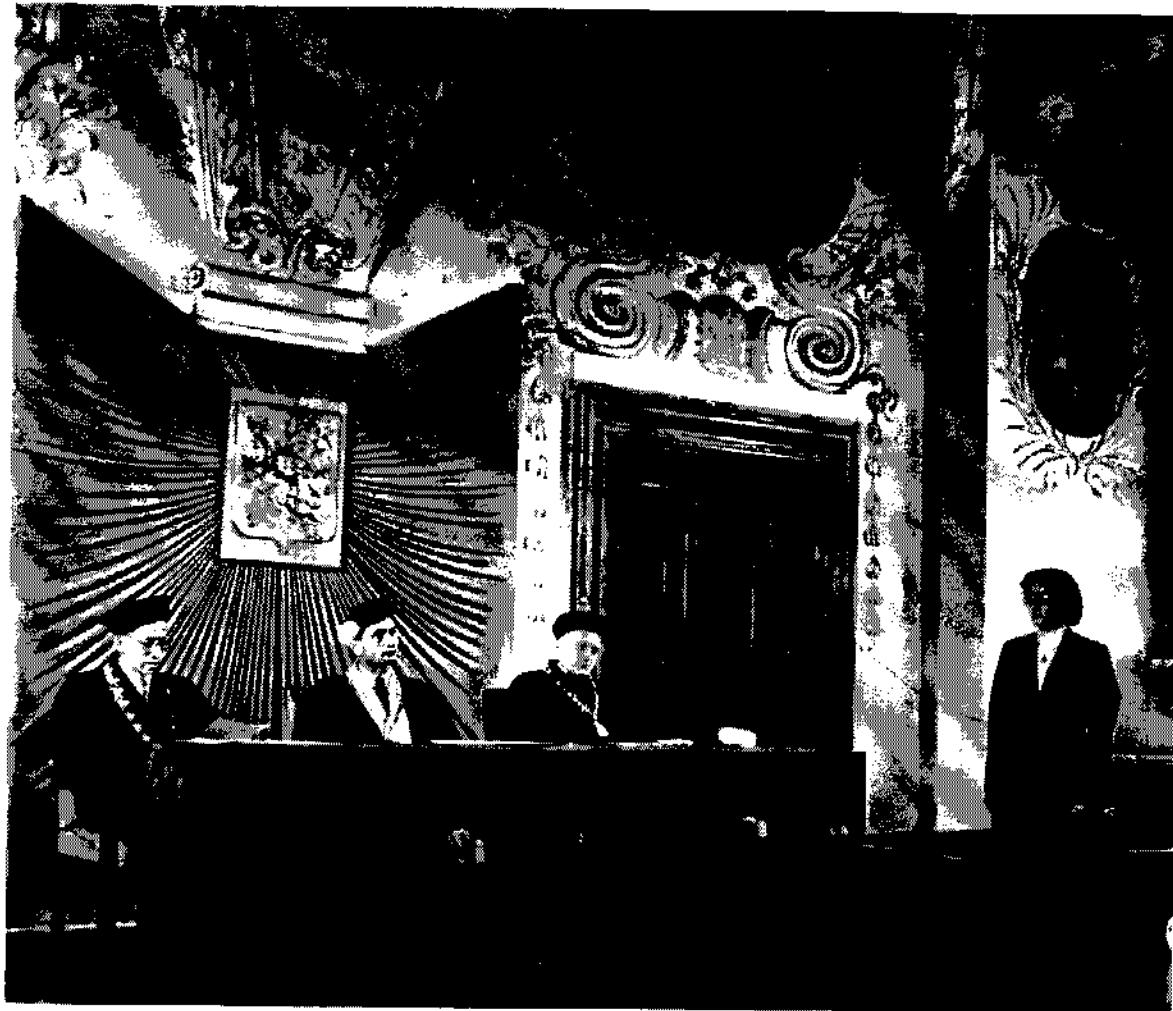
Horovice villa



High school graduation picture 1947



Wedding June 26, 1947



Award of the degree of Doctor of Technical Sciences 1953



Retirement from the University of Illinois at Chicago in 1994



At 80 in Bermuda (2007)